



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

British Schools Overseas

Inspection Report

Cranleigh School, Abu Dhabi

June 2022

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School's Details

School	Cranleigh Abu Dhabi			
Address	Cranleigh Abu Dhabi PO BOX 51072 Abu Dhabi United Arab Emirates			
Telephone number	+971 2 497 0000			
Email address	pa@cranleigh.ae			
Principal	Mr Michael Wilson			
Chair of governors	Mr Stephen Sharples			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	1639			
	EYFS	262	Preparatory	749
	Seniors	535	Sixth Form	93
Inspection dates	27 to 28 June 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Cranleigh Abu Dhabi is an international co-educational day school located in the outskirts of the city of Abu Dhabi in the cultural district of Saadiyat Island, United Arab Emirates (UAE). The school comprises four sections; pre-prep, prep, senior school and the sixth form, all of which occupy the same secured campus. The different age groups share a number of facilities, particularly for sport and recreation. The school is managed as a joint venture between Aldar Education (UAE) and Cranleigh UK, members of whom constitute the board of governors.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school seeks to provide a well-rounded British curriculum education within an international multicultural setting. It aims to provide a happy, stimulating, well-rounded educational experience for pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds. It encourages its pupils to grow into well-educated, confident, self-disciplined, and compassionate young adults who live and lead with courage, integrity, and compassion. Additionally, the school aims to prepare students with the knowledge, skills and dynamism needed to thrive at university and beyond into their respective careers, ensuring that every pupil has opportunities to make a difference within the communities they eventually choose to live.

About the pupils

- 1.3 The ability profile of the pupils is above average compared to those taking the same tests in the United Kingdom (UK). Pupils admitted to the school are expected to have sufficient command of the English language to enable them to benefit from the education provided and be able to adapt quickly to the demands of learning in an English-speaking school. There are over 79 nationalities represented at the school; around one-quarter are from the UK, one-quarter from the UAE and one-fifth from the USA. Pupils are drawn mainly from business and professional families. The school has identified 208 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), for whom specialist support is provided either within or outside of lessons. For a small number of pupils at the school, English is an additional language (EAL); however, the vast majority of pupils are bilingual or trilingual and speak English fluently. Specialist EAL support is provided for 51 pupils. Data used by the school have identified 115 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and they receive additional curriculum support at departmental level and through extra-curricular activities.

2. Inspection of Standards for British Schools Overseas

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is a body approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting independent schools in England and overseas.

Inspections for British schools overseas follow closely the framework and guidance for independent school inspection in England. ISI reports to the English Department for Education (DfE) on the extent to which schools meet the Standards for British Schools Overseas (BSO). It also takes account, where relevant, of compliance with any local requirements. Schools may opt for an inspection of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include: an exhaustive health and safety audit; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures; an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment or company law; in-depth consideration of the extent to which the school meets the requirements of local law and custom.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the Standards for British Schools Overseas. The standards represent minimum requirements, and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. In order to gain BSO accreditation, a school is required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report. If a school does not meet all of the standards, it may elect to be re-inspected once it has taken the required actions in order to gain BSO accreditation.

Headline judgements against the Standards for British Schools Overseas indicate that the standards have been 'met' or 'not met' for accreditation.

Accreditation as a British school overseas lasts for three years. This is the school's first BSO inspection by ISI.

Key findings

- 2.1 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. The requirements of the host country take precedence and no action points are, therefore, specified.**

Part 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1, 2(1)(a) and (b), 2(2)(a) to 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(e) to (i), 3(a) to (e), and 4] are met, but that relating to paragraph 2(2)(d)(ii) cannot be met because it is precluded by the host country's legislation.**
- 2.3 The curriculum in both the senior and prep sections of the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), is well balanced and successfully meets the school's aims to provide a well-rounded education in an international environment. It effectively provides pupils with experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. Pupils are enabled to acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills whilst developing an excellent understanding of English. Policies, plans and schemes of work are well developed in all subject areas and take account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of the pupils, including those with SEND for whom appropriate support is provided. In their response to the questionnaire, a small minority of parents did not think that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. However, this is mostly related to the current pandemic restrictions which have, until recently, curtailed the range of activities the school has been able to offer. An unrestricted curriculum offers a suitable range of extra-curricular activities and provides opportunities in sport, the performing and creative arts and adventurous activities. All pupils undertake courses in Arabic Studies, which include both language and cultural components. Pupils are generally well prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life beyond school, which include pupils undertaking university courses throughout Europe, Canada, and the USA and within the United Arab Emirates. The pupils' school experience is underpinned by a good understanding of fundamental British and UAE values, which closely reflect the values of the school.
- 2.4 Teaching throughout the school enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress, a view endorsed by most parents and pupils in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaires. Additional support is provided for the small number of pupils who join the school with more limited English. In nearly all lessons observed throughout the school evidence was seen of teaching that included well-planned lessons, with suitable challenge for most, employing effective teaching methods using a variety of resources, demonstrating good knowledge and understanding. Pupils were highly responsive and engaged in lessons and pupil behaviour was of a high standard.
- 2.5 The curriculum and teaching is unable, without constraint, to include content and material relating to gender reassignment, civil partnership and same sex unions as they are not recognised under UAE law and the promotion of any such related issues is precluded by UAE legislation. The curriculum and teaching is otherwise based on the English national curriculum, and effectively promotes respect for the protected characteristics such as age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief.

Part 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5(a) and (b)(i) to (v) and (vii)] is met, but that in paragraph 5(b)(vi) cannot be met because it is precluded by the host country's legislation.**
- 2.7 Pupils of all ages study the regional moral education programme which supports the key values of tolerance, kindness, resilience, gratitude and respect which are characteristics that both support the local UAE culture and those of British fundamental values. This is reflected in the Ghaf tree symbols

prominently displayed around the school, which effectively illustrate these core values. Older pupils follow a global citizens development programme which goes beyond British values to develop an appreciation of worldwide values supporting their global aspirations. This was evidenced in the recent participation of 90 pupils from Year 8 to Year 12 in a regional *Model United Nations* event. Pupils are actively encouraged to take on responsibility on pupil committees such as Head (sustainability and ecology), Heart (well-being) and Hands (charities) with one pupil group recently being awarded funding for designing and building a solar-powered water purification system for use in developing countries. Staff maintain an appropriate balance in their presentation to pupils of political issues and carefully avoid bringing their personal views into their teaching.

- 2.8 Pupils gain a well-developed sense of knowledge of and respect for public institutions in the UK as well as a deep respect for the responsibilities of UAE citizenship, which is a prominent part of school life. The national flag is displayed, and the national anthem is played across the school each morning. Diversity is celebrated in the school in which there are nearly 80 nationalities in the pupil body and over 10 nationalities in the staff group. Tolerance and respect for all, irrespective of orientation, religion, race or disability are addressed in the younger years through the moral education programme and in the senior school through the sensitive topics programme. The school encourages respect for other people with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in the UK Equality Act 2010, except where precluded by the country's legislation, as outlined in Part 1.

Part 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16] are met.

- 2.10 Appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in all sections of the school. They take into account the regional requirements of the Abu Dhabi Education and Knowledge (ADEK) education monitoring service, and also the guidance provided for schools in England. Staff receive comprehensive induction training on safeguarding procedures on appointment and also through regular update sessions throughout the year. The safeguarding policy covers all the areas required of schools in England and is implemented effectively. The vice principal and director of well-being are both appropriately safeguarding trained, and each school section has a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and a deputy DSL. The school works closely with the safeguarding governor and also ADEK representatives to ensure effective oversight and monitoring of procedures and that an annual review of policies and procedures is undertaken. The school maintains confidential records of all child protection concerns and pupils take part in either a moral education or social studies programme which covers any issues that might affect their welfare, health and safety, which is supplemented by focused year assemblies and tutor group meetings.
- 2.11 The school has suitable policies to ensure good behaviour and to prevent bullying occurring, including cyberbullying. The school also follows ADEK's guidelines for managing pupils' behaviour, which promote various appropriate initiatives to educate pupils about bullying and how to deal with any incidents they become involved in. Although a very small minority of pupils and parents are not entirely content with the school's efforts to eradicate bullying, discussions with pupils universally indicated that any incident of bullying is always taken seriously and quickly resolved. Records scrutinised and interviews conducted during the inspection confirmed that bullying occurs very rarely. Procedures to promote good behaviour, including reward and praise systems, are well known to the pupils who demonstrated exemplary behaviour both in and outside the classrooms during the inspection visit.
- 2.12 The school's approach to health and safety is rigorous; its policies are required to meet the requirements of Aldar Education, ADEK and the expectations for schools in England. As a consequence, detailed records are kept of all health and safety checks, many of which are undertaken by external advisors. The school has a dedicated health and safety officer, and the site is well secured with security guards staffing all entrances to the school and a security fence around the school perimeter. There is

appropriate CCTV coverage throughout the school, and this has recently been upgraded in line with ADEK regulations. Staff are required to undertake annual health and safety training, and ADEK undertake a monthly review covering all aspects of school safety. In addition, the civil defense (fire service) conducts a full fire-evacuation review and building inspection annually, and the ministry of food safety conducts a check of the catering facilities every two months. The school has a suitable risk assessment policy and ensures that risks which may affect pupils' welfare, health and safety are identified and mitigated, and this includes appropriate risk assessments for all off-site visits. In response to the questionnaires, the vast majority of parents and pupils agreed that the school provides a safe and healthy environment.

- 2.13 The school has appropriate policies for first aid and a separate policy which appropriately covers infectious diseases, including appropriate school Covid protocols. Staff currently visiting the site are required to show the *Al Hosn* app which confirms Covid-free status. The school has medical rooms located in the prep and senior school buildings and there are four fully trained and registered on-site nurses. Detailed records are kept of any medical incidents or consultations and large numbers of staff are first-aid trained with a further 124 senior students, 48 staff and 34 parents who have undertaken bespoke mental health awareness training sessions since January 2022. First-aid kits are available throughout the school in different locations and are provided for all sports events and trips away from the school.
- 2.14 Appropriate supervision rotas cover all sections of the school, including in EYFS where children are in sight and hearing distance of teachers at all times. Rotas appropriately require staff to be on duty at break and lunchtimes and when pupils are arriving or departing from the school during the day. As part of the school's duty of care to the pupils, appropriate extra precautions are taken during the summer period when outside temperatures can reach in excess of 40 degrees centigrade. During this period, younger pupils must wear sunhats, and outdoor sports activities are appropriately restricted. Admission and attendance registers meet UAE and UK local requirements and are backed up and stored for the requisite period of time.

Part 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.15 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**
- 2.16 The checks required for all levels of staff, including proprietors and governors, are thorough and involve compliance with the requirements of Cranleigh UK, Aldar Education and the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (MORHE), who issue work permits and the right to work in the UAE. Every member of staff also goes through ADEK clearance to determine suitability for work, which includes a check of: work history, qualifications, passport, visa, police clearances and a separate UAE criminal investigation department clearance. This is supported by Cranleigh UK conducting appropriate checks on UK nationals which include the disclosure and barring service (DBS) and barred list checks and additionally international child protection certificate (ICPC) checks. Further checks ensure that staff appointed from the UK are not prohibited from teaching or from management positions in the school. All checks are recorded accurately on a single central register of appointments (SCR) and staff files contain copies of relevant documentation used to conduct suitability checks and indicate that the information recorded on the SCR is accurate.

Part 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.17 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**
- 2.18 The school was opened in 2014 with purpose-built accommodation. The accommodation is age-appropriate being divided into separate buildings for the prep school, which currently includes the EYFS, the senior school and the sixth form. All the accommodation is modern, is fit for purpose and is well maintained and has been designed with appropriate shading to cope with the high summer

temperatures. Suitable toilet washing, changing and showering facilities are provided in different locations around the school, with separate clearly labelled facilities for staff, visitors and those who may be disabled. The school's medical centres provide appropriate accommodation and facilities for the short-term care of sick or injured pupils and separate consultation areas for male and female pupils. The buildings are maintained to a high standard and are regularly checked for any issues that might compromise the health, safety and welfare of the pupils. Identified issues are rectified quickly. The school buildings and site are regularly inspected by UAE civil defense, the ministry of education and ADEK. Aldar Education conducts its own checks, and during the main Covid period ADEK conducted additional weekly compliance checks. Lighting and acoustics throughout the school are of a good standard and drinking water dispensers are available to pupils throughout the school to ensure that pupils remain suitably hydrated. There are extensive sports, recreation and leisure facilities both indoors and outdoors including artificial pitches, a swimming pool, a dance studio, a large sports hall and a newly refurbished gym facility. The pre-prep and prep also have access to both indoor and outdoor play areas. The use of outdoor facilities is suitably restricted during periods of very high temperatures which occur during the summer months.

Part 6 – Provision of information

2.19 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

2.20 A range of information is variously published and made available to parents, the local and regional authorities and to inspection bodies. This information makes available details about the proprietors and governors, the aims and objectives of the school and the curriculum offered. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website, as are arrangements for admission, health and safety, first aid and provision for pupils with SEND and those with EAL. Provision for policies dealing with bullying, exclusion, complaints as well as copies of the most recent inspection reports are also made available on the school's website. In addition, particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year and its results in public examinations are also made available. ADEK and UAE reports conducted over the past two academic years are also made available on the school's website and through the school's digital learning platform, which all parents can access. The school provides parents with two formal reports a year on their children's progress as well as holding two parent-teacher meetings together with a number of attainment profile and grade reports at various points in the year.

Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.21 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

2.22 The school's complaints policy sets out the arrangements for parents to raise concerns or complaints using a four-stage process as required by UAE and ADEK regulations. There are clear time scales for the management of any complaints, although the aim is to resolve complaints informally in the first instance, which through scrutiny of complaints logs was seen to be the case. If concerns are not resolved in this manner, parents may proceed to lodge a formal complaint in writing. Stage 2 complaints are normally dealt with by the respective heads of each school section; however, parents may make a stage 3 complaint to the principal or directly to the chair of the governing board. Since the opening of the school no complaint has remained unresolved or needed to proceed to a panel hearing, which constitutes stage 4 of the process. However, should this occur the school has a set procedure to make provision for a hearing before a complaints panel which is controlled by ADEK as an independent organisation in line with UAE law. As in the UK complaints process, the panel consists of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and includes several external panel members who are independent of the management of the school. Complainants may attend this hearing, accompanied if they wish, and the findings and recommendations are communicated to all parties concerned. A confidential record is kept of all

complaints and findings, including action taken by the school whether or not the complaint is upheld. The school's records show that complaints are handled promptly and in accordance with the procedures both outlined in the policy and those required by UAE legal requirements.

Part 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.23 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

- 2.24 The immediate leadership and management of the school is through a joint venture with Aldar Education and Cranleigh UK, whose members constitute the board of governors of the school. During the visit, discussion with both Aldar and Cranleigh board members, including senior leaders working at the school, demonstrated that they are able to bring a broad and diverse range of appropriate skill sets to facilitate the effective running of the school. They meet their responsibilities effectively so that the BSO standards are consistently met, and the well-being of the pupils is actively promoted.
- 2.25 Of significant importance is the fact that the school has come through an extended period of Covid restrictions which has lasted longer than in any equivalent school in the UK. For example, during the inspection visit, pupils and staff were all still required to undertake Covid precautions which included wearing masks when indoors. This was being well managed by the school to the point where visitors and staff are required to present Al Hosn app evidence of Covid clearance. Additionally, the return to school of pupils post successive lockdowns, including school closures, has prompted the school to appropriately increase its mental health provision. The school was accredited with the *Well-being Award for Schools* by the National Children's Bureau in May 2020, which reported that pupils have a strong pupil voice and that their opinions were listened to and mattered. This management focus on well-being and effective use of counselling services and cross-school development of the well-being programme has had a significant positive impact on pupil morale.
- 2.26 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school is further supported by the involvement of both Aldar Education, as the managers of the school, and ADEK as the UAE inspection authority. Both organisations have a significant input to the operation of the school and give added confidence that the BSO regulations will continue to be consistently met and that the leaders and governing board continue to actively promote the well-being of pupils at the school.

3. Inspection Evidence

- 3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick and injured pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of staff, parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Tony Halliwell	Reporting inspector
Mr Timothy Michael Kirk	Team inspector (former principal, BSO school, Dubai)
Mr Kieron Peacock	Team inspector (former headmaster, BSO school, Kuwait)