



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**British Schools Overseas**

**Inspection Report**

**Belvedere International School**

**May 2023**

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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	Belvedere International School		
<b>Address</b>	Belvedere International School Hili Al Ain United Arab Emirates		
<b>Telephone number</b>	+ 971 3719000		
<b>Email address</b>	info@belvedereinternationalschool.com		
<b>Principal</b>	Mr Gary Wright		
<b>Proprietors</b>	Dr Salem Abulrahman Aldarmaki Dr Naeem Al Radi		
<b>Chair of goverors</b>	Dr Salem Abulrahman Aldarmaki		
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 16		
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	684		
	<b>Pre-Prep</b>	178	<b>Prep</b> 355
	<b>Seniors</b>	151	
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 to 31 May 2023		

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 Belvedere International School is a co-educational day school located in the outskirts of the city of Al Ain, in the United Arab Emirates. The school comprises of three sections: the pre-prep, the prep and the senior school, all of whom occupy the same secure campus. The different age groups share a number of facilities, particularly for sport and recreation. The school has joint proprietors who constitute the chair and vice chair of the governing board and governance is managed through a local board of trustees consisting of eight members of whom four are parents. Governance of the school is supported by the direct links with Belvedere School in the UK.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school seeks to nurture confident, well-rounded, tolerant and forward-thinking individuals with ambitions to fulfil their potential in an innovative, open, creative and inclusive society. The school strives to provide a well-rounded British curriculum education within an international multicultural setting. It aims to foster a caring environment and a family atmosphere leading to personal student happiness and good relationships between all members of the school community, including parents, as part of the wider UAE society.

### About the pupils

- 1.3 The ability profile of the pupils is broadly comparable 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 20 nationalities represented at the school with pupils drawn from mainly local business and professional families. The school has identified 24 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive specialist support either within or outside lessons. For a number of pupils at the school English is an additional language (EAL); however, the vast majority of these are bilingual or trilingual and speak English fluently. Specialist EAL support is provided for ten pupils. Data used by the school have identified 38 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and they receive additional curriculum support and enrichment 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.**

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

## 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 in paragraphs 2(1)(a) and (b) and paragraphs 2(2)(a) to (c), (d)(i) and (e) to (i), and the Standards relating to teaching in sub-paragraphs 3(a) to (i) are met. Those relating to paragraph 2(2)(d)(ii) (curriculum) and sub-paragraph 3(j) (teaching in respect of protected characteristics) cannot be met because they are precluded by the country's legislation.**
- 2.3 The school curriculum is balanced and provides pupils with suitable 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 and a good understanding of English. Policies, plans and schemes of work for all subjects take account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of the pupils, including those with SEND. Subject planning reflects teachers' awareness of the needs of pupils and their prior learning and schemes of work follow the English national curriculum closely. The majority of pupils do not have English as a first language. However, their spoken and written English enable them to cope well with the curriculum which is taught largely in English. The academic programme includes both Arabic and moral education, a requirement for all schools in the United Arab Emirates. (UAE).
- 2.4 Pupils in discussion with inspectors were fluent, engaging and keen to talk about their successes in the school. They expressed themselves well in English, which they were using as either a second, or in some cases a third, language. A small number of pupils with less competence in English are offered effective specialist support in the form of extra lessons and in class support. In the pre-inspection 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 curtailment of activities during the recent pandemic and there has been a slow and gradual increase in pupil uptake of extra-curricular activities as restrictions have eased. When fully operational there are 25 clubs available, including inter-school sports' competitions, such as the UAE football tournament, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) competitions and The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme (DoE) on offer at both bronze and silver level for older pupils. A minority of pupils in the questionnaire indicated that some lessons lack challenge and interest. Inspection evidence shows that most lessons visited were well prepared, with a good range of suitable activities provided to both challenge and stimulate the pupils across the ability ranges and year groups.
- 2.5 Overall teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress, although a minority of pupils require extra support to fully access the curriculum. The current Year 11 cohort will be the first examination group to take IGCSE examinations this summer and data supplied by the school suggests their attainment will be broadly in line with their UK counterparts. Currently there are no pupils taking A-level courses, as the first Year 12 cohort will commence their studies at the school in September 2023. Early years and prep school assessment and monitoring show that children make the progress expected in relation to their ability. The majority of parents and pupils in their response to the questionnaires considered that teaching enables good progress. Effective additional support is provided by the intervention team for the small number of pupils who join the school with SEND. This support is well managed by two special educational needs coordinators, who produce individual education plans for their pupils. Teaching is well planned; it includes suitable challenge for the most able pupils and employs effective teaching methods, using a variety of resources, including the projection of resources onto whiteboards. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and

understanding, and in most cases effective behaviour management. They know the pupils well and provide for their individual aptitudes and needs.

- 2.6 The curriculum and teaching are constrained to the extent to which they can proactively encourage respect for other people, as protected characteristics such as gender reassignment, civil partnership and same sex unions are not recognised in UAE law and the promotion of any such related issues is precluded by the country's legislation. The curriculum is otherwise based on the English national curriculum. Pupils' performance is measured through a variety of ways, including termly examination and topic assessments, which utilises internally assessed data. This data is not yet benchmarked to United Kingdom (UK) standards but is evaluated in relation to the school's aims. Pupils work is in most cases well marked against learning objectives and pupils are provided with suitable targets to measure success in both the prep and senior sections of the school. This is, however, not yet consistent across the school and senior leaders are working towards a stricter adherence to the school's marking policy in order that all pupils are aware of which termly targets they have successfully met. Careers guidance is offered to secondary school pupils from Year 9 in connection with IGCSE subject selection. Careers guidance is provided to older pupils through careers evenings and through presentations made by senior staff and a number of outside speakers, including parents with business expertise.

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

- 2.7 **The Standards relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in sub-paragraphs 5(a), (b)(i) to (v) and (vii) are met, but that in sub-paragraph 5(b)(vi) [encouraging respect for other people] cannot be met because it is precluded by the country's legislation.**
- 2.8 The school promotes both the values of the UAE and the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, through its global citizens programme. This promotes principles which enable pupils to develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and confidence; distinguish right from wrong; accept responsibility for their behaviour and contribute to the lives of others. In effect, pupils gain a global perspective which includes but goes beyond British values to develop an appreciation of worldwide values supporting their global aspirations. The international nature of the school pupil body effectively supports tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions and although pupils have a strong adherence to their own UAE cultural roots, they have a good understanding of faiths, customs and beliefs worldwide. The school encourages respect for other people with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in the UK Equality Act 2010, except when precluded by the country's legislation, in particular those which respect individual rights of sexual orientation.
- 2.9 A minority of pupils in the questionnaire expressed that their views were not listened to. However, inspection evidence indicates that pupil voice is a strength of the school. In discussion with pupils, across all age groups, they confirmed that they are encouraged to contribute views on the operation of the school and are able to raise concerns and complaints and were able to indicate changes that had been made in response to their concerns. Pupils in discussion were positive about their involvement in pupil council meetings and prefect meetings as a means of ensuring that their views are taken into account. 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. The Arabic teacher-led moral education programme, delivered to prep and senior school pupils, in particular, encourages tolerance and respect for all, irrespective of religion race or disability. The older pupils follow a sensitive topics programme as required by the education ministry, which addresses many issues apart from the precluded characteristics. Pupils escorting inspectors around the school were quick to point out the prominent displays around the school, which effectively illustrated both UAE and UK core values. Staff maintain an appropriate balance in their presentation to pupils of political issues and carefully avoid bringing their personal views into their teaching.

### Part 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

- 2.11 Appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. Such arrangements take account of UAE law and have regard to guidance in the United Kingdom. The school ensures that staff training, including that for governors is appropriate. It enables pupils to be listened to and provided with early help. The particular vulnerability of the small number of pupils with SEND is acknowledged and allowances are made for them. Those with particular responsibility for safeguarding have an up-to-date level of training for their roles, including for the early years. There is an appropriate safeguarding governor in place and the school adheres to local child protection regulations, including making referrals to the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) and the Ministry of Interior, child protection centre. New staff receive appropriate induction training. Although all staff receive annual safeguarding update training, not all staff were fully familiar with the referral processes. This matter is being addressed by senior leaders in the form of a refresher update programme. Pupils receive suitable guidance relating to issues that might affect their welfare, health and safety through the personal, social and health education programmes, assemblies and tutor time. There is suitable review of safeguarding procedures. Pupil discussions indicated that they feel well looked after in the school; however, a minority of pupils indicated in the questionnaire that they could not easily discuss concerns with teachers. Inspection evidence, through pupil discussions, confirmed that they would feel comfortable to approach most members of staff and they cited the school social workers as being the key pastoral staff they would choose to go if they had any concerns or worries. Pupils unanimously said that they found the school culture to be friendly and welcoming and they demonstrate a clear sense of pride in being a member of the school community.
- 2.12 Procedures to promote good behaviour are known and understood by pupils and are in most cases effectively implemented by staff. A suitable system of rewards celebrates pupils' success, efforts and achievements. Appropriate sanctions are applied if the need arises. In the prep and senior school sections, weekly celebration assemblies focus on pupil success. A house points system operates across the school. Records are appropriately kept of the very few behavioural incidents that occur, and these are effectively monitored in order to identify any trends. Bullying including cyber-bullying is prevented as far as is reasonably practicable. Local requirements with regard to the inappropriate use of the internet and social media are met. In the questionnaire, a minority of pupils felt that some bullying is not managed well by the school. However, in discussions pupils unanimously confirmed that bullying is very rare and that the school would always deal with bullying when it was reported to teachers. Pupil behaviour, as seen around the school, is of a high standard and reflects the school values of empathy and kindness. Records indicate that sanctions, which are rarely required, are applied consistently.
- 2.13 The school complies with relevant health and safety laws and fire safety standards, including those which apply under local law and those required by ADEK. Recordkeeping in this area is effective and shows that there is effective overview of health and safety procedures. Fire drills are carried out regularly for all sections of the school and are suitably recorded. There is an effective system for the provision and maintenance of emergency routes and exits and an appropriate maintenance programme for fire detectors, alarms and extinguishers. The premises are maintained to a suitable level of safety and hygiene and logs of checks meet the local requirements and are appropriately maintained. The school has appropriate policies for first aid and they are implemented effectively. A small minority of pupils in the questionnaire stated that first aid treatment is not always prompt but pupil discussions and records showed that pupils who are ill or injured are almost always treated in a timely and appropriate manner. A school nurse is always in attendance during the school day. A satisfactory programme of risk assessments has been drawn up for most areas of the school and any related activities that pupils undertake. These can vary in quality and do not currently follow a common protocol; however, they have recently improved with the adoption of a colour coded risk matrix. Senior leaders are working with the governors to ensure that all risk assessments follow the



same methodology and rigour when assessing potential risk. There is effective monitoring of the security of all school entrances and exits to create a secure and safe environment for both pupils and staff.

- 2.14 Pupils of all ages are appropriately supervised throughout the school day and on school trips. Appropriate supervision rotas cover all sections of the school, including in the early years 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. The second break of the day is slightly longer to allow pupils to attend the prayer room should they require to do so. Appropriate extra precautions are taken during periods of extreme heat, during which pupils always play under appropriate shaded cover and outdoor sports activities are appropriately restricted. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained and also meet the ADEK requirements for the registration of pupils and logging of attendance. In addition, there is a requirement to log in on a daily basis to attend Arabic and moral education lessons.

#### **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 school carries out the required checks on staff, proprietors and any other adults working at the school to ensure suitability to work with children, in line with UAE local requirements and guidance issued to schools in the UK. All non-UAE staff are required to obtain an appropriate visa to work in the UAE, which results in the issue of a right to work identity once suitable checks are completed. In addition, all UK nationals are checked through the disclosure and barring service (DBS), which includes a barred list check, as well as through the international child protection certificate (ICPC) checks. All staff are required to be in possession of a national identity card and require police clearance before commencing work at the school and once employed must undertake an additional medical screening process which is a requirement for all employees. All governors are subject to appropriate checks and in addition must be approved by the Ministry of Education to serve as governors of the school. A suitable single central register of appointments is appropriately maintained which details the recruitment checks undertaken. Staff files include all of the required documentation and are well maintained, reflecting good practice in recruiting all categories of staff.

#### **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 Suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for pupils of all ages. There is appropriate changing accommodation for all pupils and a medical room, with suitable toilet and washing facilities, is located within the main building which caters for the needs of pupils who are ill or injured. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety requirements, including those required by UAE law. Identified issues are rectified quickly. Acoustic conditions and both internal and external lighting are suitable. The provision of drinking water is suitable as water dispenser units are located throughout the school and there is ample provision of washroom facilities for all age groups. There is suitable provision of outdoor spaces available for physical education, including a large multi-purpose play space with suitable shading. Indoor facilities including a library, swimming pool, sports hall and a specialist sensory room are available for use by all age groups. In addition, there is a separate play area for the early years pupils. Recreational provision is currently being increased to include, a multi-functional sports hall and artificial play surface, adjacent to the main school building.

## Part 6 – Provision of information

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

2.20 All of the required information to comply with the requirements is provided or made available to current parents and parents of prospective pupils. The contact details for the school, the principal, the chair of the board of governors and a statement of the school's aims and ethos are published on the school's website. Policies and particulars of arrangements for admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions; provision for pupils with SEND and any with EAL; the procedure for complaints; the curriculum; arrangements to promote good behaviour and to prevent bullying; health and safety and the schools' provision for first aid are also made available to parents. The school's policy on safeguarding pupils is published on the school's website. The school provides a written report on each pupil's progress and attainment on at least a termly basis and there are up to three parental meetings held each year to allow parents to discuss their child's progress.

## 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 written complaints are normally dealt with by the respective heads of each school section. 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 (Private Schools and Quality Assurance Sector) 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 senior leaders of the school, together with the chair and vice chair of governors, who are joint proprietors of the school, work effectively with the advisory board governors to ensure good overall governance of the school. Together, the governors demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities so that the BSO standards are met consistently, and the wellbeing of the pupils is promoted. Members of the advisory board are regular visitors to the school, and the chair and vice chair meet with the principal of the school on at least a half-termly basis. The principal has responsibility for line management of the heads of each school section in order to maintain consistency of delivery of educational standards across all age groups. In addition, the advisory board has individual members who have an appropriate overview of safeguarding, health and safety and staff recruitment, and all board members are required to undertake regular training, which includes safeguarding training. This arrangement ensures that there is effective oversight and monitoring of the school's policies and procedures, including an annual review of safeguarding procedures. Although

local governors have the prime role in the administration of the school, additional advice is available and sourced when required through the close links with Belvedere School in the UK. The school is adequately resourced to support the curriculum, and pupils' welfare is given a high priority alongside academic achievement. The chair of governors, in coordination with the individual governing board sub-committee chairs, monitors all areas of the school and offers effective and appropriate challenge to the school's senior management team. Senior leaders are well informed and have a clear understanding of how to safeguard children and promote the wellbeing 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 the chair 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 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

Mrs Alison Peterson

Team inspector (headteacher, BSO school, Kuwait)