



BSME
Accreditation
Visit Report

Belvedere British School
Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates

1st – 3rd June 2014

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1. Context

1.1 What are the key contextual factors?

Belvedere British School in Abu Dhabi is a non-denominational, mixed independent school for pupils from ages 3 -19 years: at present though, the school accommodates pupils aged 3 - 14. It was opened in September 2012 with Years 1 – 6. In September 2013, the secondary phase was opened starting with Years 7 and 8. The school is a privately owned day school, licensed by the Abu Dhabi Education Council. Approximately 30 nationalities are represented and 45% are Emirati. Over 69% are Arabs with smaller proportions of pupils coming from 21 other countries.

In the Early Years Department, there are 231 children and Key Stage 1 has 172 pupils. Key Stage 2 has 214 pupils and 51 pupils in Years 7 and 8.

The school follows the National Curriculum for England, supplemented with resources from the International Primary Curriculum. There is provision made for subjects required by the host country: Arabic Language, Islamic Studies and Social Studies.

The school has strong links with Belvedere Preparatory School in Liverpool, UK which has over 130 years' of experience in education. They provide academic support and advice to encourage pupils from both countries, who have the right to continue their education in either Belvedere Prep School (UK) or in Belvedere British School (UAE).

Belvedere British School aims to encourage the pupils to work collaboratively, developing resilience, independence and team work skills. This is linked to a strong focus on standards in literacy and numeracy across all age groups. The school has a clear mission to work with local partners to incorporate culture and tradition into an exciting, rewarding and enriching programme for both pupils and parents.

ADEC requires all new private schools to be inspected in their first year of opening. In March 2013, the school was judged to have significant areas for development. In October 2013, the follow-up monitoring visit report highlighted areas of development and noted that improvements had been implemented: it suggested the school had the required capacity for sustained improvement.

1.1 British nature of the school

The British nature of Belvedere British School meets the standard required for accreditation. The school ethos, nature and appearance reflect many British educational characteristics:

- Staff have UK recognised qualifications and many are registered as teachers with the Department for Education in the United Kingdom. Newly qualified teachers are provided with educational development linked to key aspects of initial support delivered in the UK.
- The National Curriculum of England has been adopted throughout the school from Early Years to Year 8, integrated with topics based on the International Primary Curriculum (IPC). The curriculum is adapted to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets local requirements.
- The school is organised according to the structures used in English schools.
- Classroom management, displays of work, a three term year and age-related year groups contribute to giving a British feel to the school.
- Pastoral care is a key aspect, and the school provides support and guidance for all its pupils.
- Pupils are guided to take an active role within the school, and organisations such as the School Council contribute towards the whole school ethos.
- As well as implementing the curriculum for England, assessments are based on national standards from the UK.
- British practice is evident in approaches to performance management, staff target setting and annual review meetings.
- Extra-curricular provision including clubs and school trips, is being implemented in line with British best practice.
- Educational partnerships, such as those with Belvedere Preparatory School (UK), provide a clear structure of support and guidance that reflects British educational developments. Texts, materials, educational equipment and software are UK sourced.

Parents are supportive of the British nature of the curriculum. Interviews with parents, suggested they appreciate the quality of education delivered at the school.

2. Quality of learning

2.1 How effective are teaching and learning?

Teaching and learning meet the standard required for accreditation. Some aspects are above the standard.

There is a purposeful learning atmosphere in most classrooms. Pupils respond particularly well to teaching that offers challenge and interesting activities.

Within EYFS, pupils access a range of activities which are child-initiated or supported by the teacher or assistants. Emphasis is placed on the linguistic development of the child to access teaching which is in English. Teachers model language, create opportunities for pupils to speak and further develop their phonetic, reading and writing skills. Pupils actively engaged in discussions on the character of Red Riding Hood, recognising adjectives. Guided reading lessons were effective: pupils had a range of effective reading skills to cope with more complex words and to develop fluency.

Effective questioning is utilised to develop literacy skills in the Early Years; consistent strategies are used to good effect. Positive behaviour reward systems are employed and expectations are high. Pupils demonstrate independence and a willingness to share with their peers from an early age. They were enthusiastic when writing letters to a pirate, and outcomes were of a high standard. Support staff work as a team to provide a nurturing, learning environment.

The progress made by the pupils across EYFS is good. Planning involves the whole team and is firmly focused on responding to the children's individual needs. Teachers monitor and track progress, to ensure they have a good understanding of each child's learning steps.

The teaching in Key Stage 1 and 2 was also of a good quality. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed; the majority were above the required standard. In the best lessons, there were strong relationships between teachers and pupils. The most effective teaching and learning was characterised by high expectations, pace and inspired pupils.

In nearly all lessons teachers used a range of effective teaching strategies to meet the needs of their pupils. Phonics lessons were well structured and included a variety of starter activities and encouraged pupils to practice and develop appropriate levels of speaking and listening. The provision of phonics to support the range of pupils' needs is a strength of the literacy curriculum. Year 5 pupils were actively involved in an appropriate level of phonics work to match their learning needs.

Learning tasks and activities are well matched to the pupils' needs and this was sometimes enhanced by the use of an effective range of appropriate resources. Progress observed in literacy lessons on 'Super Heroes' and Poetry reflected the high expectations across the lessons. Pupils in

Year 3 discussed onomatopoeia and used similes effectively in their writing. In the most successful lessons, teachers provided practical activities that enabled pupils to be more involved in open-ended investigations and paired discussions that supported them in a deeper understanding of concepts.

For pupils in Key Stage 3 overall, the teaching meets the needs of all pupils well, including those with special needs and those for whom English is an additional or second language. Teaching in science exceeds the required standard. Strengths in teaching are the consistency of planning and the variety of strategies implemented, along with the very good relationships between pupils and teachers in many lessons.

Most teachers have strong subject expertise, which makes their lessons interesting, and they have high expectations of pupils. Assessment of learners' work is regular, and target setting allows pupils the opportunity of peer and self-assessment. In drama and physical education, the pupils worked within a safe environment, and learners were given opportunities to think critically. In Arabic, a variety of teaching strategies were in evidence including assessment for learning. Learners were engaged, and age-appropriate activities were offered, such as role play.

2.2 How well are pupils cared for, guided and supported?

The standard of care, guidance and support for pupils meets the standard required for accreditation.

A Health and Safety Policy is in place which is compliant with local requirements; the role and training of school Environmental Health and Safety Officers further supports the process. A committee meet twice a year to review policy and procedure. Fire drills, civil defence evacuation and regular maintenance of equipment are satisfactory. Risk assessments are regularly carried out.

The security of the site is a strength, guards are strategically placed at access points and CCTV cameras monitor the perimeter and premises. Coded security doors limit access to key areas of learning and further safeguard the pupils and staff.

The school nurse fulfils requirements and provides a thorough, well documented service impacting positively on the health and welfare of pupils. Many staff are emergency first-aid trained and are identified on risk assessments for off-site visits.

Pupils develop independence in the early years and access opportunities provided through free flow; children share and collaborate well, and are respectful of the resources provided to them.

Leadership roles are provided through 'Young Leaders' and the 'Pupil Council', giving pupils the opportunity to develop their personal skills and impact directly on school life; other options for special roles are given through the Red Crescent, ICT leaders and Librarians groups.

Pupils across all key stages are happy young people, who are proud of their school and thrive on the rich variety of learning experiences that it provides. Feedback from focus groups, lesson observations and informal conversations with pupils clearly suggest care for one another and the wider community. Pupils interviewed both formally and informally were articulate, courteous, self-assured and confident in speaking to adults.

Attitudinal surveys have been completed for the Upper School and these are being used to inform the school development plan. Parent voice is collated through surveys, questionnaires and parents evenings.

2.3 How well does the curriculum meet pupils' needs?

The curriculum provided meets the standard required.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which meets all local regulations, and is supported by a range of extra-curricular activities.

In the Foundation Stage, the UK non-statutory guidance 'Development Matters' is used to good effect to plan and deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum. Pupils are tracked against age-related expectations. Records of achievement, pupil observations and target setting support their progress.

Teams across the school plan together, share resources and review the provision regularly. Pupils access a range of activities which are child-initiated or supported by teachers or assistants. The teachers provide a rich and varied curriculum based around themes relevant to the children's needs. The curriculum delivered ensures children experience activities that encourage exploration and experiences of their world in a creative and personalized learning environment. Teachers are encouraged to deliver learning activities that encourage higher order learning skills.

The progress that pupils make is tracked in accordance to the National Curriculum level descriptors; appropriate targets are then set and shared with pupils and parents. Pupils display a good awareness of their attainment levels and can discuss their individual targets for improvement.

The curriculum matches the three identified primary aims of (i) enabling pupils to realise their potential as a unique adult, (ii) developing through co-operating with others and (iii) preparing pupils for lifelong learning.

Although the school has been established only a short time, middle leaders are beginning to review the curriculum so that it is modified to the needs of different cohorts effectively. Many children join the school with limited English language skills: the curriculum has an appropriate focus on developing English across the curriculum. As a result of this review process, the school has identified the need to extend the use of differentiation in learning and teaching, so that the best practice is consistently used across the school.

2.4 How well does the school work in partnership with parents, other schools and the community?

The school works effectively in partnership with parents, other schools and the community: it meets the standard required.

Belvedere has established a number of successful links with parents, communicating via letters, newsletters and the school website. Face-to-face meetings are given a high priority.

Parents are also provided with access to key policies such as:

- Particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusion.
- Particulars of educational and welfare provision for students for whom English is an additional language.
- The curriculum statement outlines the courses of study that students will follow.
- The Code of Conduct is based on positive reinforcement.
- There are policies relating to bullying, child protection and health and safety.

The school is developing a new prospectus in line with the perceived needs of all parents. Teachers in the lower primary school provide effective contact points for parents collecting pupils. Middle and upper department class teachers ensure they are easily accessible should a parent wish to discuss an issue.

Parents are invited to attend a range of meetings, and as the school is becoming more established attendance is increasing. This has been encouraged by the establishment of a Parent Teacher Team who aim to further enhance home and school links. The school has actively sought the support of its parents' body and surveys and questionnaires demonstrate that parents do support and value the contribution the school makes in their sons' and daughters' lives.

Focus groups of parents confirmed the high quality and effectiveness of home school communications. They appreciated that access to teachers and the senior leadership was straightforward and staff always ensured they were available to discuss any issues they had. Parents valued the detailed discussions on their child's progress, and the report and tracking details throughout the year.

Parents are represented on the school board and meet regularly to discuss developments, issues and strategic planning.

The school has successfully developed links with a range of external agencies to support art, sports and service departments such as the Environmental Agency and Police. These links enable learners to take a pride in their home and host country. Clear plans are in place to further develop links both

within the local community and internationally. These include enhancing the sports provision through collaboration with British sports academies and summer boarding courses, in conjunction with the UK Belvedere School.

Belvedere British School is committed to developing a culture of charitable giving and engaging pupils in charity work and community service.

2.5 How well does the school prepare pupils for future learning?

Belvedere prepares pupils satisfactorily for future learning: it meets the standard required by BSME.

3. Standards achieved by pupils

3.1 How high are standards achieved in the areas of learning, subjects and courses of the curriculum?

The standards achieved by pupils are satisfactory: they meet BSME requirements.

In Key Stages 1-3, the majority of pupils are making expected levels of progress in reading. In Year 1, the percentage rises to 100%. These pupils have been in the school for the two years the school has been in operation. Pupils read widely and often: this has led to an improvement in literacy skills and evidence in pupils books show that they learn well in other subject areas.

There is evidence of the EYFS profile being implemented, but it is not used to its full extent. Some learners are meeting the standards expected in the UK. End of EYFS profile data is not currently compared to UK standards and there is limited use of exemplification materials, which limits the rigour of assessments.

To enable pupils' individual progress to be tracked, standardised assessment materials are used. Pupil progress is tracked and monitored throughout the school. Baseline assessment is in place and moderation happens through teacher evaluations. Targets are set to match expected outcomes in England. All pupils are expected to make at least 2 sublevels progress and 80% at Key Stage 3: these are teacher assessed. Pupils who meet their targets are then given a new target, as they progress.

Target setting is a strength and in many classrooms is used effectively by teachers. Learners know their target levels and what is required to enable them to achieve it. Pupils at Key Stage 2 and 3 are able to use self-assessment and peer assessment as a tool to reflect upon their individual targets.

Most pupils in Key Stage 1 are making expected levels of progress. In Key Stages 2 and 3 pupils, standards are not in line with expected UK levels: however, progress for many pupils at Key Stage 2 and 3 is above expectation, even though not all have met UK averages in maths, English and science. Many pupils entered the school with levels well below national standards and have only been in the school for a short period.

Data is analysed and value-added measures are provided by subject teachers, middle leaders and the senior leadership team. Care is taken to ensure that literacy and numeracy are embedded across the curriculum: they are evident in lesson observations and planning. Assessment for learning is being implemented in all subject areas including Arabic, and it is used increasingly effectively.

The school is beginning to establish consistent procedures for tracking progress and strategies for analysing data to give a clearer indication of individual pupil value-added. As a result of careful monitoring, tracking and target setting, most pupils make good progress: school target setting suggests that in 2 years, most children will achieve UK national standards.

3.2 How well are pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities developed?

The development of pupils' attitudes, values and personal qualities meets the standard required.

Pupils' attendance is 90.9% for this academic year: this reflects a rising trend and is due to improvements in monitoring attendance and punctuality. Policies and procedures are in place to support the process, by encouraging pupils and their families to realise the benefit of consistent attendance and the subsequent impact on learning. A positive link through an Arabic speaking member of the administration department is established, and personal calls are made to parents when early signs of lack of attendance are realised. Recognition of good attendance is given through weekly certificates for both individuals and classes. This raises the profile of the issue and the pupils enjoy the competitive edge that this brings. Celebration is made through assemblies.

Students' spiritual awareness is fostered by the wide variety of beliefs and cultures represented within the school. World religions and traditions are celebrated, and pupils are tolerant and understanding of one another. Cultural awareness and empathy are fostered by the friendships between pupils of many different nationalities, by their daily contact with and appreciation of British and UAE customs, and by the multicultural environment in which they live and learn.

The implementation of the behaviour policy and staff training in raising expectations has had a positive impact; pupils are mostly well behaved, respectful and polite. A reward system is in place and there are a variety of effective strategies used across year groups.

Pastoral support and sanctions are in place, and records of misbehaviour are monitored and carefully tracked; the lead teachers intervene with identified pupils and support is given to assist them to improve. The school social worker is also available for further advice and intervention.

Throughout the EYFS, teachers have a good sense of the identity of each individual pupil. Opportunities to develop pupils socially and emotionally are well planned. The creation of 'All About Me' boxes which are warmly shared with the class give a sense of the child's cultural heritage and an insight into their personal likes and dislikes. Staff have adapted International Primary Curriculum topics to ensure they provide a cultural understanding of the host country and provide opportunities for values and beliefs to be explored.

Highly effective relationships are developed across the school between staff and pupils in order to promote success in learning. Staff create a positive learning environment within the class. Pupils commented that they feel confident about confiding in teachers and they knew teachers would respond. The quality of the teachers was reported by pupils as the major strength of the school. A range of extra curriculum activities are offered. The students felt that the School Council were keen to share ideas and felt they had a positive voice in some school developments.

4. Leadership and management of the school

4.1 How well is the school led and managed?

Leadership and management meet the standard required for accreditation.

The Belvedere British School is led and managed effectively. The principal and vice principal provide strategic leadership through an articulated and shared vision that encourages all to achieve educational excellence. Their support in developing the teaching and learning is having a positive impact. The shared vision has helped stabilise the school, and the capacity for sustained improvement is now good.

The senior management team recognise the need for distributed leadership and have introduced a range of practices to empower staff to take a greater responsibility for translating the school's vision into effective and innovative actions. School leaders have clearly defined roles and responsibilities that enable them to be both held to account and hold others to account as they continuously seek further ways to improve the standards of the school. Delegated leadership and management have enabled staff to make an important contribution to the effective development and progress of the school through identifying and implementing strategies that impact on levels of achievement. The Senior Leadership Team recognises the ongoing need to provide professional development for middle leaders.

There is a determination by the school leaders and managers to further develop the school through identifying and implementing strategies that will impact on raising standards of attainment. Through a developing self-evaluation process, clear priorities have been identified that encourage wide-scale staff involvement and evidence-gathering. Accurate analysis has enabled the school to implement clear priorities for development. The monitoring of development plans by the leadership team and the board, ensures that all staff are aware, involved and held to account for the effective implementation of change.

Through an investment in training on the development of teaching skills, there has been a positive impact on learning across the school. During the accreditation visit no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The development of target setting has had a positive impact on raising pupils' achievements further.

Professional communities have been established to share good practice. Their impact is beginning to be felt across the school. The leadership team has been successful in building an effective team in a short period of time. The anticipated positive rate of retention of staff should encourage a good capacity for further development.

The quality of governance is good. The board of governors is appropriately made up of representatives from both the local and wider community who have an educational background.

All policies and decisions are reported and governed by the board. Working in partnership with the senior management team, a strategic plan for the school has been developed that sets targets to ensure the all-round growth and development of the school. This plan is shared and agreed by the board of governors. Key performance indicators are measured and reported on by the school. The board recognises the need to develop a longer term strategic plan that will provide key 'mile posts' for monitoring future developments over the next 3 to 5 years.

Overall authority and responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school is with the school principal: the governance board offers guidance and support. These are also actively provided by the on-going links with the sister school in the UK. The school reports it is financially stable and spends an appropriate amount of money on development and improvement of the school.

5. Quality of provision

5.1 How good are the accommodation, the staffing levels and the resources?

The premises, staffing and accommodation meet requirements. The overall quality of the site and its space are good; the campus is a new build and has the capacity to support excellent education.

The school campus provides a range of facilities suitable for the students' needs. These include networked ICT suites, a multi-purpose hall, a music room and an art and design studio as well as a library and science laboratories. Younger students have access to play areas that are covered, and older students can use a range of multi-purpose sports areas.

Overall, the monitoring of the site has been identified as an issue: inspectors highlighted a number of areas of concern such as security issues regarding access to the pump room, surfaces being potential tripping hazard and maintenance of climbing equipment. Leadership is seeking to take prompt action to resolve these issues and be more involved in the continual monitoring of risk and resolution.

Staffing levels are good and the school is developing a range of resources and equipment that meet the needs of the students. This level of resourcing needs to be evaluated to ensure all the curriculum needs are fully met.

The board and principal ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the safeguarding, child protection arrangements and recruitment checks. They ensure that the school complies fully with local regulations and best practice from the UK. Prior to the confirmation of staff appointments, appropriate checks, including police checks in the country of origin, are carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, right to work in UAE and their previous employment activity.

Staffing levels were good and well-structured identifying areas for development such as the employment of school cleaners rather than contract staff to maintain higher standards and safeguard pupils. The majority of staff are appropriately trained and the school recognises the need for on-going professional development especially with the less experienced staff. Qualifications, subject-specialisms, background and health checks meet local requirements and regulations. The appointment of a greater number of middle leaders has increased the schools capacity to improve further.

The provision in the Early Years and Lower School is under-resourced and impacts on the ability to implement fully the Early Years Foundation Stage and National Curriculum. Investment in good quality resources to provide book corners, role play, construction, and sand and water play has been identified by leaders as critical to the next stage of development.

6. Overall effectiveness of the school ?

6.1 How successful is the school ?

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education that meets the needs of pupils. It has only been in operation for two years, the school's aims are being well met.

6.2 What the school does well

The school provides a quality of education that meets the standards required. The quality of learning and teaching is good. The principal and vice principal have been able to establish an effective partnership that ensures that this young school makes good progress. The improvements being made are highlighted by how well the school has been able to implement previous inspection recommendations.

Senior leaders under the guidance of the principal provide strong leadership and management. The vision of the school is shared effectively. It is focused on the continued drive to enhance further the standards already achieved. Collegiality and collaborative planning contribute to a common purpose that is supportive and effective. Middle leaders are enthusiastic supporters of the school, sharing a commitment to focus on developing the quality of learning and teaching.

The effective implementation of the curriculum provides the opportunity for all pupils to develop as learners. Lesson planning is successful, enhancing the learning and teaching. The most successful lessons were clearly planned and delivered, demonstrating secure and enthusiastic subject knowledge. In the best lessons, teachers used a range of questioning skills, differentiation and set appropriate challenges.

Teachers and support staff provide a high level of care and guidance to all pupils. This helps to create a positive atmosphere that encourages and motivates pupils. Appropriate policies and procedures regarding the health, safety and well-being of pupils are in place.

In the short time the school has been open, a positive learning environment has been established enabling pupils to develop their personal skills and qualities. They are thoughtful, well behaved and treat others with respect. The school is quickly establishing itself as an effective learning community with ambitious plans for future developments.

The pupils are proud to be members of the school community, and value the opportunities it provides. Parents are developing a confidence in the school and appreciate the effective partnership that is being created.

6.3 What should the school do to improve further?

To improve further, the school should

- implement consistent health and safety procedures to ensure all identified concerns are addressed
- to allow for a more creative curriculum, enhance the resources and physical spaces to develop a richer learning environment
- enhance the quality of teaching by identifying the development needs of all teachers and by providing effective, differentiated professional development.

6.4 Does the school meet the standards for being an accredited BSME school?

Belvedere British School meets the standards required and exceeds them in some aspects.

The Accreditation Team is recommending to the BSME Executive Committee that the school **does** meet the accreditation requirements.

Evidence source/s

During the inspection visit, 37 full- or part- lessons were observed by inspectors. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Pupils' workbooks were scrutinised, and discussions were held with the senior staff, the management team, a range of teachers, and groups of pupils. Two and a half school days were monitored.