

Al Ain English Speaking School

British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

Inspection Dates: 2 to 5 February 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

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|----------------|---------------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Information about the school

Al Ain English Speaking School is a well-established, fully inclusive school situated in Al Ain, Abu Dhabi on a single campus. It opened in 1979. There are four phases, with pupils aged from three to 18 years. In 2024, the school became part of the Cognita Group and the managing director of Cognita in the Middle East is the chair of the school's governing board. The current principal was appointed in August 2025. In 2024-25, there was a 50% turnover of staff, with a high proportion of early career teachers (ECT) joining the school. Senior and middle leadership teams have remained stable in recent years. In the early years, the school follows the early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework. In primary and secondary, it follows the national curriculum for England (NCfE), with pupils taking IGCSE and A level qualifications. There are 2,234 pupils on roll from diverse backgrounds. The largest nationality group is Arab and there are currently 1,654 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL). Some 312 pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The sixth form is relatively small, with 94 students, most of whom progress to higher education, including prestigious UK universities.

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 73 part-lessons and carried out learning walks, including extra-curricular and enrichment activities. A total of six lessons were jointly observed with leaders, providing opportunities for professional dialogue. Inspectors also attended assemblies

and tutorial sessions. The team held 30 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

Al Ain English Speaking School is a good school and provides a good 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 good across all key stages.

Pupils who have special educational needs and those who are new to English language learning make at least expected rates of progress from their starting points over time. Pupils make good progress in English language and communication from the very start because they learn letter sounds and blends and practise building words which they read and speak.

Most children who begin in the foundation stage do not have English as a first language. The skills they steadily gain enable them to expand their vocabulary and learn how to spell and read words and short phrases. As a result, they broadly match language and literacy skills found in early years classes in England.

Pupils' good progress continues in the primary phase. By Year 6, 93% attain or exceed curriculum standards in reading and writing. School leaders and teachers carefully track pupils' progress over time to identify and respond to the particular needs of individuals and to highlight and address common concerns such as improving writing. This close monitoring enables teachers to provide targeted support where required.

In secondary, pupils read widely in class and in the library. They write summaries of their reading which demonstrate improving skills in spelling and punctuation. They make accurate inferences from stories about characters and motives. They apply their learning to their own lives in their essays. In the IGCSE 2025 examinations, 69% of pupils gained grades at 9 to 6 which is above the England average. About 57% of pupils who took the English 2 IGCSE gained grades at 9 to 6, which is above the international average. The very few students who took A-level examinations gained high grades with all gaining grades at A* to B in English literature, above the England average. Students' speaking skills are particularly strong in the sixth form. Most develop a broad vocabulary over time, which they use to good effect in discussions and when writing detailed

analyses of texts of different genres. Students improve writing skills steadily, as they compose thoughtful descriptive and imaginative essays and learn to express and justify their viewpoints coherently when writing.

Attainment and progress in **mathematics** are good.

This includes pupils with SEND, boys and girls and those for whom English is an additional language. Pupils develop secure and increasingly sophisticated mathematical knowledge as they move through the school. In the early years, children build strong foundations in number through practical activities, including the use of tangible materials. They confidently compose and decompose numbers to 10 and apply early counting strategies, which prepare them well for key stage 1.

In key stages 1 and 2, pupils strengthen their fluency in key facts, including number bonds, multiplication tables, fractions and measurement. Pupils use mathematical vocabulary accurately and explain their reasoning with growing levels of confidence. Lesson visits showed effective modelling, positive mathematical talk and appropriate levels of challenge. By upper primary, pupils reason securely and apply mathematical methods with increasing independence.

Progress in key stage 3 is improving. While assessment information shows that a proportion of pupils in Years 7 and 9 are not yet working at the expected standard, lesson visits confirm that they are developing secure fluency and growing confidence in applying new concepts. Leaders have accurately identified gaps in algebra, proportional reasoning and multi-step problem-solving, and their targeted support, strengthened curriculum sequencing and close monitoring are beginning to raise standards. Early positive impact of this support has already improved outcomes, particularly for lower-attaining and Emirati pupils, whose progress is now more closely aligned to expected standards.

By key stage 4, outcomes are good. In Year 11 attainment is high, with most pupils working above expectations. In 2025, 87% of students gained IGCSE grades at 9 to 4, which is higher than the England average. Pupils show secure procedural fluency and confident application of methods to more complex examination-style questions.

In the sixth form, students benefit from small-group teaching and strong subject knowledge. Students in Year 13 demonstrate secure understanding of advanced mathematical concepts, including calculus, functions and statistics. At A level, in 2025, 85% of students gained grades at A* to C, which is above the England average.

Attainment and progress in **science** are good across the school.

Pupils, including those with EAL and SEND, make consistently good rates of progress due to well-targeted provision. In the early years, children develop secure foundations in their understanding of the world. Teachers effectively use the 'Grow Zone' to build children's resilience. For instance, when distinguishing between natural and man-made objects, children

are encouraged to embrace the struggle of classification, ensuring that they develop the independence to solve scientific problems confidently.

In primary, effective teaching ensures that most pupils meet or exceed age-related expectations. Practical activities engage learners well and help to develop their scientific knowledge and understanding, including skills in observing, recording results, and drawing simple conclusions. In key stage 2, specialist teachers deliver practical lessons that encourage pupils' enthusiasm and curiosity. Most pupils move into the secondary phase with a secure grasp of foundational scientific concepts.

In key stage 3, pupils build progressively on their foundational knowledge. Lessons are sequenced well, allowing most pupils to work at or above age-related expectations while developing confidence in planning investigations, analysing data, and evaluating evidence. In Year 7, pupils successfully apply scientific vocabulary and enquiry skills during collaborative tasks. While girls currently outperform boys, targeted interventions and data-driven monitoring are being implemented to bridge this gap. Consequently, the majority of pupils make good rates of progress, developing the secure understanding required for future success.

In key stage 4, pupils make strong progress, with attainment in science comparing positively to England averages. In 2025, 91% of pupils in biology, 89% in chemistry and 95% in physics achieved grades of 9 to 4, above international averages and broadly in line with England averages.

In the sixth form, students' analytical discussion of complex biological systems and empirical evidence leads to coherent, evaluative arguments, demonstrating high levels of autonomy, deep inference and academic fluency in scientific discourse. Science outcomes at A level are consistently high, with 82% of students in biology, 71% in chemistry and 93% in physics achieving grades at A* to C. This good progress supports students' successful applications to prestigious higher education institutions globally.

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

This is across all phases of the school. Attainment in 2025 IGCSE examinations exceeded England and international averages in just over 75% of subjects. At AS level and A level, the majority of subjects showed A* to C attainment above England and international averages, but the number of candidates in several subjects was very small. Pupils show good understanding of key concepts in most lessons, and work productively, making good rates of progress. They enjoy collaborating and supporting each other's learning. Sixth-form students are fluent and assured in presenting ideas in history. In creative media, Year 10 pupils designed magazine covers and content, applying their skills well. In Year 7, pupils showed good understanding of perspective in art and, in Year 3, pupils were able to apply what they had learned about rocks to a real-life context.

Summary of other judgements against the BSO standards:

- The quality of the curriculum provided by the school is good (see Part 1 below).
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good 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 good (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 the requirements of the Standard (see Part 7 below).
- The leadership and management of the school are good (see Part 8 below).

As a result of this inspection, undertaken during February 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 good.

The curriculum is broad, balanced, and strongly British in character, ensuring that pupils are well-prepared to enter or re-enter the UK independent educational system. The senior leadership team ensures that there is a written curriculum policy, supported by appropriate schemes of work, which is implemented effectively across all phases. The curriculum provides pupils with experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education.

In EYFS, the curriculum is based on the 'Development Matters' guidance. This provides a secure foundation for children as they progress into the primary phase. In the primary and secondary sections, the school follows the NCFE. Leaders have developed detailed curriculum maps that ensure a seamless transition and clear vertical progression of knowledge and skills. For example, the extensive use of proprietary schemes of learning in English and mathematics teaching in key stage 2 is successfully extended into key stage 3 to ensure continuity in learning.

A particular strength of the curriculum is the cross-phase collaboration in core subjects. In science, music, art and physical education, specialist secondary teachers work with key stage 2 pupils to deliver practical skills, which results in a smoother transition to the more rigorous

requirements of key stage 3. In the secondary phase, the curriculum is governed by established England examination boards. This ensures that the content remains aligned with international and British standards and effectively prepares students for external examinations.

The curriculum is inclusive and takes good account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those with SEND and those who have EAL needs. Well-targeted provision and regular moderation, facilitated through the Cognita group, ensure that the curriculum remains relevant for the majority of learners. While this inclusive vision is clearly established in the school's written plans and documentation, leaders are now focused on ensuring that teachers execute these approaches consistently in all lessons to further enhance the learning experience for every pupil.

The school effectively promotes fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, tolerance and mutual respect. These values are integrated in the curriculum and the school's ethos, ensuring they are not undermined. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is a core component across all key stages. This develops respect for others and pays particular regard to the protected characteristics of age, disability, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, as set out in the Equality Act 2010. Those characteristics which UAE law precludes the school from addressing are marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation. Relationships education forms part of the PSHE curriculum, and the school's written policy on this aspect is available to parents on the school's website.

In key stages 4 and 5, pupils and students receive accurate and impartial careers guidance. A fully accredited careers counsellor provides one-to-one interviews and hosts careers fairs, enabling pupils to make informed choices about their future pathways. Careers support begins in Year 7 with personality testing as part of the PSHE programme. Consequently, sixth-form students are well-equipped for the next stage of their education, with many progressing to higher education institutions in the UK and globally.

The quality of **teaching, learning and assessment** is good across the school.

Effective teaching ensures that most pupils make good rates of progress from their various starting points. Teachers demonstrate appropriate subject knowledge and follow well-sequenced curriculum maps that align with the NCfE. This ensures good development of skills and knowledge as children move from the EYFS into the primary phase and through to the secondary school. However, teachers do not always deliver lessons with sufficient adaptability or modify planning appropriately to meet the needs of pupils with SEND, EAL, or those who are higher attainers. In the EYFS, teachers successfully promote engagement by using both the indoor and outdoor environment and purposeful resources, such as imagery of diverse locations, to stimulate children's curiosity about the world.

In the primary phase, teaching is effective. In key stage 2, the school's use of specialist teachers to deliver certain lessons helps to successfully prepare pupils for the rigours of the secondary curriculum by ensuring that they are secure in foundational practical skills. For instance, pupils in a science lesson successfully followed experimental protocols to explore the relationship

between sound and distance. Throughout the school, teachers' expectations are clear, and they plan lessons well to include purposeful resources that stimulate thinking and promote engagement.

Teaching in the secondary phase and the sixth form is consistently good. Secondary leaders work closely with key stage 2 coordinators to ensure continuity in learning. In most subjects, teachers effectively encourage the use of accurate technical and subject-specific vocabulary, helping pupils to communicate their learning effectively. Most students demonstrate a keenness to learn and are developing the critical thinking skills typical of a British education.

The school's assessment systems are robust and contribute to the good rates of progress made by most pupils. The school uses standardised testing, including Granada Learning (GL) assessments, to effectively benchmark pupils' attainment against England standards. In primary, regular data meetings enable teachers to monitor progress. Leaders in the secondary phase use information gained from assessment, alongside Raise-online and internal tracking to establish individual 'flight paths' for pupils, ensuring that target setting is realistic yet challenging. Consequently, most students in key stage 4 and the sixth form understand their current levels of attainment and what is required of them to reach their predicted grades.

The school has established internal monitoring and evaluation systems to maintain the quality of teaching. Feedback and marking are used across the school to help pupils understand their next steps. In most lessons, teachers check for understanding effectively, which helps to tackle pupils' misconceptions in real-time.

While teaching is effective in promoting engagement, there are instances where challenge for more-able learners is inconsistent. In some lessons, particularly in the primary phase, teachers do not always develop further or challenge pupils' initial thoughts to ensure the deepest possible understanding.

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

The standards relating to the SMSC development of the pupils are met except for the standard in paragraph 5(b)(vi). The school is unable to meet this standard 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.

The school has highly effective arrangements for promoting those protected characteristics which it can address, such as including people with additional needs in all activities. School leaders ensure there are no entry restrictions based on gender to daytime and extra-curricular activities, and they actively encourage pupils from Year 1 through to Year 13 to participate. The science curriculum suitably covers learning about pregnancy and growth. In 'getting to know you'

activities at the beginning of the school year, pupils hear about the religious beliefs of others in a spirit of respect and tolerance.

The carefully planned curriculum provides rich opportunities for pupils in all key stages to learn about similarities and differences, in their school and in the wider world. In early years, a link with a school in Malawi, through the Cognita 'Sparkle' programme, ensures the very youngest children can begin to appreciate life in a very different country.

Pupils learn about Britain across all subjects. In English lessons, pupils compare the transport that they use every day in the UAE with British modes of transport, such as the London Underground. Their weekly reading of an online age-appropriate newspaper inspires discussion of events around the world, such as climate change and flooding in different countries. Pupils show high levels of maturity and understanding in these discussions.

Pupils almost always behave responsibly. They are receptive and positive in lessons; they routinely manage their own learning very effectively because they are clear about teachers' expectations. Pupils relate very well to each other and are welcoming, polite and respectful to teachers and visitors. They help to create a learning atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance which is also seen in their relationships in the playground and dining area. There is suitably light-touch adult supervision in school, but pupils' self-regulation and positive behaviour permeate the school's environment. For example, older pupils move to different classrooms maturely and efficiently, often through very busy corridors. On the very rare occasions where pupils' behaviour deteriorates, they are encouraged to consider the negative impact of their actions on others and to work out how they can put things right. Pupils themselves provide excellent role models for others.

The school is fully inclusive. There are many opportunities for pupils of all abilities to participate in all activities and everyone enjoys equal access to high quality resources. Pupils demonstrate much understanding and empathy, such as when they learn about people who have autism, in well-planned tutor time sessions.

The school encourages pupils to take on wide-ranging responsibilities, such as house officers. Pupils build confidence through their thoughtful contributions to assemblies and the appreciation they receive from others following performances. Their self-esteem is further secured through awards and certificates for their achievements and also for the efforts they make to do their best.

Pupils show remarkable levels of understanding of public institutions in the UAE and in the UK. They make comparisons between government organisation in both countries. They know who the rulers are in each emirate and they respect civil and municipal authorities. As they progress through the school, they learn more about the British parliament, constituencies, elections and members of parliament. Older pupils receive very useful guidance about the British university systems and students' lifestyles.

The primary parliament and school council provide pupils with deep insights into representation and voting. Pupils are nominated for positions, state their cases persuasively before electors

and, if successful, represent the views of others, taking their responsibilities seriously and making an active contribution to the life of the school. Pupils enjoy high levels of autonomy when serving on the school council and provide pertinent examples of how school leaders listen to and act upon their views, such as the extension of the extra-curricular activities programme.

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

The **welfare, health and safety** of pupils and staff is good.

The school provides a safe, calm and orderly environment in which pupils feel secure and well supported. Induction systems help pupils settle in quickly, and pastoral teams identify concerns early. Pupils who need help receive timely support from tutors, counsellors and leaders, and records show clear follow-up and coordinated actions.

A strong safeguarding culture is evident. Staff know their responsibilities and pupils feel confident to speak to trusted adults. Vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND or pastoral needs, are well supported.

Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Procedures reflect UK expectations and comply with UAE requirements. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and seven deputies provide strong oversight and use systems well to record, triage and escalate concerns. Case files show appropriate chronology, clear decision-making and regular contact with external agencies, including the Family Care Authority. Staff receive annual safeguarding, health and safety and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) training, delivered in accessible formats for all staff groups, including drivers and support staff. Regular quizzes and briefings reinforce expectations. Pupils show a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe through assemblies, PSHE lessons, anti-bullying work, online-safety lessons and the anonymous “Whisper” reporting tool. Pupils’ voice surveys confirm that most feel safe, and that individual concerns are followed up carefully.

The school ensures pupils and staff work in a healthy and safe environment. Policies for health and safety, risk assessment, supervision, behaviour and first aid are in place and applied consistently. Staff complete event-specific and activity-specific risk assessments and implement appropriate control measures. First aid provision is very good. Qualified nurses monitor medical plans, respond promptly to incidents and track high-frequency cases to identify patterns.

Behaviour is good across the school. Staff apply expectations consistently and maintain accurate records for serious incidents. There are effective strategies in place tackling all aspects of behaviour and the school deals with incidents of misbehaviour quickly. Attendance stands at 96.6%, above the UK national average, and punctuality is monitored with targeted interventions where needed.

Overall, leaders promote pupils’ welfare, health and safety well and demonstrate a sustained commitment to strengthening practice.

Part 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets the requirements for this standard.

The school has exemplary systems in place to ensure that everyone employed by or through the school is suitable to work with children. The school maintains a comprehensive single central record (SCR), including all relevant information, which is signed off by a named member of the human resources team.

The human resources team regularly reviews and updates all information relating to identity, medical fitness, right to work verification and criminal record checks as relevant to the nationality of the employee or other adult. The school follows up all references. Governors and senior leaders are trained in safer recruitment procedures, attending recruitment interviews as part of their roles.

All staff receive safeguarding training at the start of the year or at the point of joining the school, including teachers, supply staff, volunteers and school governors. Training materials are provided in languages other than English, such as Hindi, Arabic and Urdu, to ensure that ancillary and support staff understand their responsibilities.

All visitors to the school must sign in with security staff and there is no access to the campus for unauthorised persons. The school has recently introduced a 'yellow lanyard' system for parents so that they are immediately identifiable when dropping off or collecting their children.

Part 5. The premises and accommodation

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The premises provide a safe, well-maintained and increasingly modern environment that supports pupils effective learning. Campus management systems are well established with security staff regularly completing daily, weekly and monthly checks. Leaders use a live tracking system to monitor maintenance requests. Maintenance records show that most requests are dealt with promptly, usually within 48 hours.

Fire safety arrangements are secure. Fire alarms, extinguishers, emergency lighting and detection systems are serviced quarterly by an approved contractor. Fire drills take place termly, and the most recent drill received a 92% performance rating from Civil Defence, indicating strong compliance and well-rehearsed routines.

Learning environments across EYFS, primary and secondary are clean, age-appropriate and conducive to purposeful learning. Classrooms have suitable lighting, ventilation and acoustics. Recent campus improvements, such as upgraded playground spaces, improved closed-circuit television (CCTV) coverage, replacement furniture for key stages 1 and 2, and strengthened Wi-Fi and cybersecurity systems, have improved safety and enhanced educational provision. Further upgrades are scheduled for July of the current year, including the refurbishment of science laboratories and installation of smart screens in EYFS.

Toilets and washing facilities are clean, well maintained and appropriately allocated. Cleaning routines are organised effectively, with male and female cleaners assigned to specific areas. Medical accommodation is fit for purpose and includes appropriate washing facilities and close access to toilets. Drinking water points are readily accessible, clearly labelled and safe, with hot and cold water available for handwashing.

Outdoor spaces provide ample room for physical education, recreation and structured play. These areas are well supervised, and equipment is suitable for each age group and maintained to a good standard so that pupils can develop their fitness and gross motor skills while also increasing their levels of self-confidence.

Overall, the premises offer a safe, secure and well-organised environment that supports pupils' learning and wellbeing.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

Leaders use a range of effective measures for conveying information to parents. Most parents appreciate the quality of this information and the regular newsletters from classes and departments. Parents who met inspectors confirmed that it is very easy to contact teachers and leaders, and that they appreciate the ongoing conversations which help them to understand how their children are doing and about the wider life of the school. Parents of children with SEND are full of praise for the school's approach and feel highly involved in the planning and review of their children's work. They receive frequent, informative updates from teachers and therapists. Parents commented that it is easy to communicate electronically and in person with staff, when they have concerns or questions.

Parents are particularly pleased with the range of extra-curricular activities offered at school and the detailed information they receive when helping their children decide which ones to attend.

The school's website contains relevant information about the school and has links to all policies, for example, safeguarding, behaviour and anti-bullying, health and safety, inclusion, admissions, complaints and first aid. There are details of how to contact leaders and governors. Admissions criteria and fees are clearly highlighted along with the school's aims and aspirations. The website provides links to previous inspection reports. There is further useful information for parents at different stages of their relationship with the school, for example, a primary handbook in English and Arabic and detailed information on university entrance.

A total of 362 parents returned the survey before the inspection visit. In each area, the majority of parents responded positively to the quality of information they receive from the school, including their children's progress and well-being. School staff provide written reports for parents on their children's attainment and progress each term, with up-to-date information on

pupils' academic and personal achievements. Pupils themselves told inspectors that they attend progress meetings alongside their parents and appreciate the feedback that they receive. Parents and pupils stated that they find these meetings very helpful when planning which subjects to take for examinations in the secondary school.

Part 7. The school's procedures for handling complaints

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The Cognita Group complaints policy and procedure are available to view on the school's website. The school aims to respond to complaints within 24 hours in term time, and five days during school holidays.

Most complaints are resolved informally through dialogue with teachers and middle leaders, and some are referred to the principal. Records show that, over the past year, most complaints have been satisfactorily resolved. On the rare occasions that a concern cannot be resolved internally, it is referred to the Cognita panel. At this stage, the complainant has the right to be accompanied to a panel hearing by a friend or representative.

Leaders have recently updated the complaints policy to include the fact that at the panel hearing stage, one member of the panel needs to be independent of the original complaint. The school keeps meticulous written records of all complaints, action taken and outcomes, which remain confidential.

Part 8. Leadership and management of the school

Leadership and management of the school are good.

The new principal and the senior leadership team have an ambitious vision for the school, emphasising holistic education alongside academic achievement. This aligns with the philosophy of the Cognita Education Group, of which the school has been a member since 2024. Cognita, together with the principal, ensures that the school meets the BSO standards, operates legally and has clear financial policies. The school ensures that safeguarding requirements, including safer recruitment procedures, are met. The recruitment policy emphasises open and non-discriminatory practice.

The managing director of Cognita in the Middle East serves as the chair of the school's governing board, working together with the principal to set a clear strategic direction for the school. The principal has autonomy in the leadership and management of the school but is accountable to the governing board through a rigorous appraisal process.

The school's self-evaluation identifies relevant strengths but lacks precise information on what needs to be improved. However, the principal and senior team have a very secure understanding of areas for development and a strong commitment to raising standards, demonstrating good capacity to improve.

There has been significant investment in the modernisation of the school premises, resulting in improved facilities to support and enhance learning, which is an ongoing programme. Both the school's governing board and senior leaders see teaching and learning as a key priority. A recent initiative is the introduction of the teaching for impactful learning programme (TILP) which aims to provide a consistent approach to teachers' classroom practice. This forms the basis for an extensive professional development programme for all teachers. Leaders have a good knowledge of where the relative strengths and weaknesses are in terms of teaching, and increasingly foster a culture of reflection, self-evaluation and the sharing of good practice.

Staff appraisal provides excellent support and challenge through open dialogue, and senior leaders systematically identify developmental needs and implement strategies to deliver these. Teachers appreciate the opportunity offered by the school to enhance their professional development by, for example, pursuing National Professional Qualification (NPQ) accreditation.

There is a devolved leadership structure with both academic and pastoral roles identified for each phase of the school. Middle leaders are committed to improving provision and they act as role models for the staff they manage. Senior and middle leaders provide good levels of support to the high number of teachers either new to the school or new to the profession, for example, by providing structured mentoring and protected developmental time. The precise roles and responsibilities of middle leaders are sometimes unclear such that the drive for improvement has not yet demonstrated maximum positive impact. Currently, the quality of subject leadership varies considerably across the school.

Leadership of EYFS is very strong. The EYFS leader promotes effective teamwork among teachers and teaching assistants, facilitates child-initiated learning alongside systematic teaching of the EYFS curriculum, and leads by example, so that children make rapid rates of progress.

The school gathers the views of pupils, parents and staff through annual surveys, and designated senior leaders analyse the results of each. This information is used in strategic planning. Most parents confirm that school leaders are very approachable and that the school is responsive to their views. Pupils are able to share views through the primary parliament and the student council. The BSO staff survey was completed by about half of the teachers, and most who participated stated that they were proud to work at the school. There is an online system whereby staff and students can raise any concerns anonymously, encouraging open and honest communication.

The school actively promotes equality and diversity through the PSHE curriculum and school activities, such as assemblies and the tutorial programme. In a Year 9 tutorial session, pupils sensitively considered the theme of belonging and how their actions can help others who may feel that they do not belong, feel part of the school. The school highlights matters such as celebrating diversity and appreciating other countries and cultures, with pupils demonstrating excellent personal and social skills.

Early Years Provision

The quality of **early years'** provision is good.

The EYFS curriculum is broad, creative and fully aligned with the statutory EYFS framework, securing strong foundations for school readiness. Leaders use data effectively to target developmental gaps, ensuring children make good rates of progress from their various starting points. A high proportion of children have EAL needs. Outcomes show that 65% of children achieve a Good Level of Development, which is slightly below the UK average.

The curriculum follows the 'Development Matters' guidance, balancing child-initiated exploration with adult-led challenges. Specialist teachers deliver physical education and understanding the world lessons, providing expert subject knowledge. For example, teachers introduced the concept of man-made and natural concepts in the 'Grow Zone'. Children were able to sort items and explain why a tortoise is natural and not man-made. Teachers successfully promote engagement by using the outdoor environment and chicken coop to stimulate curiosity.

Recent improvements to the outdoor area significantly enhance the learning environment. These include a new sensory walk, featuring a diverse range of plants and the installation of soft flooring to ensure children's safety. The outdoor provision is now thoughtfully zoned to reflect indoor learning areas, ensuring a seamless transition for children's exploration. Furthermore, the area is well-shaded, which supports learning in all weather conditions and ensures children can gain access to outdoor play even during the warmer season.

Strong partnerships with parents ensure that learning continues at home. Staff communicate regularly, inviting parents into the setting to understand the importance of learning through play and the value of reading. Consequently, children are well-prepared for a smooth, phonics-led transition into key stage 1.

Sixth-Form Provision

The quality of **sixth-form** provision is good.

The sixth form provides a good quality of education and prepares students well for their next steps in higher education and employment. The provision has expanded steadily over the past three years, increasing from 50 students in 2021 to 94 students in the current academic year, reflecting both students' confidence in the offer and leaders' strategic development of sixth-form pathways.

A broad and coherent curriculum is in place, with 16 A-level subjects, including the three sciences, mathematics, business, humanities and creative subjects. These align well with students' academic profiles and aspirations. The introduction of AS level design and technology in the current year demonstrates leaders' willingness to refine and widen provision in response to students' demand and staffing capacity.

Attainment remains generally in line with or above England averages. Current AS level outcomes indicate strengths in biology, chemistry and English, all of which are above international averages, and mathematics, which is above the England average.

Leaders' analysis demonstrates secure trends in performance over time, with strong progress in the current year in art, computer science and ICT, continuing previous strengths in history, physical education, psychology, mathematics and physics.

Leaders use IGCSE outcomes and GL data to set personalised trajectories. Students understand these expectations and respond positively to them. Students receive personalised pastoral support and academic guidance that encourages independence and maturity. Careers guidance, supported through one-to-one discussions, careers fairs and university pathways events helps students to make the right choices. Work experience is being re-established, supported by strong parental engagement. Destinations remain a considerable strength. In the previous year, 38 of 41 students progressed to university, including places at competitive international institutions.

Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities that enhances their wider development. They take on varied leadership roles in the student council and sixth-form committees, including events, trips and graduation planning. They engage in academic extra-curricular activities, debate competitions, Olympiads, sustainability projects and mentoring initiatives, which build confidence, character and readiness for adult life. Students speak confidently about their ambitions and value the guidance they receive. Leaders monitor provision closely and have a clear vision for the next phase of development.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

Al Ain English Speaking School 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 that relate to 2(2)(d)(ii) or 5 (b)(vi). Al Ain English Speaking School 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 points for development:

1. There is variability in the quality of teaching throughout the school. Leaders should ensure that teaching is consistently strong across all areas of learning and is effectively matched to the needs of all pupils. This will enable pupils to make maximum progress and achieve their full potential.
2. The school's middle leadership structure identifies pastoral and academic leadership positions in all phases, but roles and responsibilities are not always clearly defined, which limits the positive impact of improvement strategies. Leaders should review arrangements for middle leadership and clarify responsibilities and reporting systems, in order to ensure cohesive working and effective strategies to raise standards.
3. The school's self-evaluation process identifies strengths but does not highlight specific areas for development. Leaders should ensure that self-evaluation provides clear and accurate information about what needs to be improved in order to inform strategic plans. This will enable leaders to take more focused action to eliminate barriers to improvement.

Summary of inspection judgements

| | | | |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
| Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

The quality of education

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| 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 | Al Ain English Speaking School |
| Type of school | Non-selective |
| Date school opened | 1979 |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 18 years |
| Gender of pupils | Boys and girls |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils) | 2,234 |
| Number on roll (part-time pupils) | N/A |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | 23,630 AED to 48,220 AED |
| Annual fees (boarders) | N/A |
| Address of school | Etisalat Khalid bin Sultan St Al Muwaiji'i Ugdat Al Mutawaa Al Ain Abu Dhabi United Arab Emirates |
| Telephone number | +971 3 76788636 |
| Email address | School@aaess.sch.ae |
| Headteacher | Mr Ian Temple |
| Proprietor | Cognita Group |

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 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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