

# Horizon International School, Dubai

## British Schools Overseas Inspection Report

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Lead Inspector: Sally Lane  
Team: Andrew Mears  
Fatiha Maitland

Age Group: 3–18 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. The inspection was carried out by three inspectors from Education Development Trust who spent four days at the school. Education Development Trust 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 over 2,500 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 British Schools Overseas (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 Boarders 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 Standards are as follows:

1. The quality of education provided by the school (Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment).
2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils.
4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff.
5. The premises and accommodation.
6. The provision of information.
7. The manner in which complaints are handled.
8. The leadership and management of the school.
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

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>

### Proportions used in the report

90–100%	Vast/overwhelming majority or almost all
75–90%	Very large majority, most
65–74%	Large majority
51–64%	Majority
35–49%	Minority
20–34%	Small minority
4–19%	Very small minority, few
0–3%	Almost none/very few

## Information about the school

Horizon International School (HIS) is an inclusive, co-educational school that follows the British curriculum. It is located in the Umm Al Sheif area of Dubai. The school opened in 2008 and the current principal joined in 2018. It is one of seven schools in the UAE owned by Cognita, a global education network that operates 106 schools worldwide.

There are currently 1385 pupils on roll aged three to 18 years, making it smaller than most other all-through schools in Dubai. The school has a capacity of 1586 pupils and intends to increase to this size soon.

The school is fully committed to ensuring every child has a chance to be the best version of themselves and its strapline, 'Everyone Counts, Everyone Contributes, Everyone succeeds', embodies this. The HIS is a diverse international community with 86 nationalities represented. Almost half of all pupils use English as an additional language (EAL) but just 71 have intensive language support to help give them access to the curriculum. The school provides extra learning provision for 87 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has identified 168 higher potential, gifted pupils. Teachers are fully aware who these children are and ensure all learning activities allow them to reach their full potential.

Children in the early years follow the early years foundation stage (EYFS) curriculum. In key stages 1 to 3 pupils follow the English national curriculum. This leads to IGCSE courses in a range of subjects. In the sixth form, pupils study AS and A levels. All pupils go on to attend universities worldwide.

## Summary of the evidence base used by the inspection team

This BSO inspection was carried out by three Education Development Trust inspectors. The BSO registration and self-review documents were completed and the inspection dates were agreed upon with the school with 10 weeks' notice of the start date of the inspection. Inspectors had access to information about the school before the inspection.

Inspectors visited 65 part-lessons and conducted nine learning walks. There were 22 meetings with leaders, teachers, pupils, parents and members of the school's governing board.

Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work. They analysed a wide range of documents relating to assessment, policies and strategic plans. They inspected the school's safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors also considered the views of parents, pupils and staff expressed in the BSO survey, which was sent to parents and staff just prior to the inspection.

## Evaluation of the school

Horizon International School is an **outstanding** school and provides an **outstanding** quality of education for pupils from three to 18 years.

The school meets all of the BSO Standards 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.

Pupils make outstanding progress in **English** across the school. The trends over the previous three years have remained consistent across the school. There is no significant difference between groups. Girls sometimes achieve slightly higher than boys, but the school is aware and is addressing this, through the choice of texts used.

In English, children in foundation stage 2 begin the year with higher communication and language skills than is typical for their age, particularly if they joined the school at age three. They make excellent progress as a result of imaginative teaching in inspired learning environments that enhance the development of children's speaking and listening skills. Teachers use engaging books such as the 'The wrong kind of knight' to support children's writing. Phonics is taught systematically throughout the early years and into Year 1 in groups of similar ability. As a result, almost all pupils passed the phonics screening test at the end of Year 1 to reach standards well above England averages.

In the primary phase, pupils continue to make rapid progress, again reaching standards well above England averages in both reading and writing. There is a culture of collaboration and communication and a holistic approach to skills' development. In Year 6, pupils' work showed an excellent understanding of the features they might use to successfully write an adventure narrative linked to a book they were reading.

In secondary, pupils continue to develop their vocabulary and can make clear and relevant links between texts and contexts. IGCSE results in both English language and

literature are well above English averages at the top grades of 9 to 7. Pupils make outstanding progress so that on average they achieve 1.3 grades higher than predicted in language and over half a grade higher in literature.

Just three pupils sat A level literature in the previous year. However, in Year 12, in the current year, the subject has attracted 22 pupils to the course. These pupils were exploring the aspects of tragedy in Othello with much independence, discussing with one another to reach a very high level of critical analysis.

In **mathematics**, pupils' attainment and progress are outstanding overall. Across all phases, boys and girls perform similarly. Pupils with SEND and EAL make excellent progress in relation to their different starting points as a result of the high-quality targeted support and interventions they receive, as well as the adapted curriculum to meet their needs.

Across the early years, children make rapid and sustained progress. They can say the number names in order, count up to a given number, add sets of objects and form numerals correctly.

In key stage 1, pupils rapidly develop their problem-solving and critical thinking skills, resulting in excellent progress. By the end of Year 2, they can tackle mental mathematical tasks and conduct challenging operations, involving addition, subtraction, and multiplication, and explaining the properties of the different shapes they see in their environment.

By the end of primary, the vast majority of pupils continue to make outstanding progress. They attain levels in internal and external tests that are above those typical of their age. They are confident to present a mathematical justification and to explain their thinking. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, most pupils could tackle complex operations of how to multiply fractions by fractions, and explain their findings clearly.

Secondary pupils continue to acquire excellent knowledge, skills and mathematical understanding. In Year 7, pupils expertly form expressions from numerical contexts and explain their high levels of reasoning. In Year 10, pupils demonstrate excellent skills to factorise and to solve quadratics independently. At IGCSE level, pupils attain well above the England averages and on average achieve over a grade higher than predicted.

In the sixth form, pupils continue to make excellent progress. They successfully complete a range of demanding activities as is evident in the way they interpret

the relationship between variables using correlation and linear regression, developing excellent higher order thinking skills.

The attainment and progress in **science** is outstanding across the whole age range. Most pupils attain standards that are higher than England, local and international expectations. Progress across the school in science is very strong against individual starting points.

In the early years, almost all children attain age-related expectations and more than 70% exceed them. Almost all make better than expected progress against their starting points. Teachers facilitate science as a separate subject in the early years, and it is interwoven with cross-curricular links and opportunities to develop skills. The time-machine in the central early years' concourse stimulated considerable scientific discussion.

In primary, recent internally moderated data shows a continuing upward trend of both attainment and progress across all groups, above England averages. Teachers guide pupils to experiment, hypothesise, draw conclusions and record their results accurately. For example, in Year 2, pupils freely experimented with the effect of light on photographs and drew interesting conclusions. They become fluent in scientific methods and fair testing. Skills of enquiry are both nurtured and challenged. By Year 6 pupils begin using laboratories, having already acquired practical skills in the classrooms and outside.

In secondary, IGCSE results are above England averages and roughly in line with expected grades from their starting points. The latest internal data indicates that attainment and progress measured from starting points are outstanding. Pupils in Year 11 physics practised wiring a British 3-pin electric plug, as part of a lesson to compare the safety of differing international systems. The introduction of triple science is encouraging a greater commitment to sciences at A level.

In the sixth form, pupil numbers are small. Excellent teaching dovetails with enthusiastic pupils in small groups to produce outstanding outcomes in lessons. Pupils fluently conduct their own research into science-based topics.

All groups of pupils achieve exceptionally well in a broad range of **other subjects**. Last year all pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, achieved five or more IGCSEs to grades 9 to 4 including English and mathematics. They consistently outperform their potential over a three-year period, gaining around half a grade higher on average. Internal and external assessment information across the whole school indicates that pupils make excellent progress in every phase of the school.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of other subjects. Inspectors observed Year 7 pupils making scones in food technology and Year 4 rehearsing a Viking song for a performance. In Spanish and French, pupils develop their vocabulary and grammar to write for different purposes. In drama, Year 11 pupils performed their monologue performances with feedback from their peers. Pupils' engagement and their full and thoughtful answers in all lessons demonstrate a mature approach to learning.

**Summary of other judgements against the BSO standards:**

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

As a result of this inspection, undertaken during November 2023, 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.



## Standard 1. The quality of education provided by the school

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

The quality of the **curriculum** is outstanding. It is broad, balanced and relevant and encompasses the school's core values and vision. The school combines the requirements of the English EYFS and national curriculum with the requirements of the UAE. It emphasises commitment to developing pupils to be independent and confident learners with high aspirations. Adaptations to the international and UAE contexts enrich the curriculum. The curriculum is regularly modified and reviewed to meet the needs and abilities of all pupils, including SEND and EAL. It provides excellent continuity and progress across the school.

In the EYFS, the curriculum offers excellent opportunities to help children develop their knowledge and skills in the required areas of learning. There is highly established provision to promote early reading and writing with a major emphasis on spoken English. In the primary phase, teachers base learning on the requirements of the English national curriculum. Schemes of work are carefully planned to further develop pupils' language, critical thinking, problem-solving and investigative skills. In the secondary school, teachers design the curriculum to prepare pupils for the demands of a range of IGCSE subjects. In the sixth form, a wide choice of A level courses, enriched by a range of programmes, strengthens pupils' personal qualities and values alongside their academic studies. For pupils with SEND, the school provides alternative accredited courses such as the award scheme, development and accreditation network (ASDAN).

Curriculum policies, schemes of work and plans encourage respect for all pupils, with particular regard to the protected characteristics of age, disability, religion or belief, marriage, pregnancy and maternity. The school cannot fully address marriage and civil partnership, sex and sexual orientation and gender reassignment due to the laws of the UAE. A personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme places a high priority on establishing pupils' relationships, identities and health and well-being. Older pupils have access to relationships education, helping them understand how to deal with their emotions and changing bodies.

British values such as democracy, the rule of law and respect for public institutions and services in UK and beyond are strongly embedded through the teaching of moral education, history, geography, English literature, and business studies. Pupils learn Britishness through, for example, the Vikings in Year 3 and British authors in English literature. Through sustainability projects, pupils explore the role of British conservationists such as Sir David Attenborough in raising awareness of environmental issues.

The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and events that allow pupils to meet their aspirations. Sixth form pupils lead after school clubs alongside teachers and senior leaders. Pupils' engagement in activities, including arts, crafts, music, dance, drama, chess, and sports is high. Trips to places of interest in the community such as Eco Venture, Safari Park and the Astronomy Centre add enjoyment to learning. Pupils successfully raise funds for charities to support the less fortunate in society.

Induction and transition arrangements are highly organised, ensuring that pupils settle smoothly into the life of the school. In Year 9, pupils establish a careers profile which supports them in selecting their IGCSE options. In the sixth form there is a work-experience programme and pupils enjoy several careers workshops. Guidance on university applications is extensive, and includes visits from university representatives and local guest speakers and support with applications to UK and international universities.

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

Teaching is consistently well planned and skilfully delivered in the early years up to the sixth form. Teachers never prioritise tasks over thinking, and busyness is never mistaken for real learning.

Teachers use the comprehensive data about pupils' attainment and progress to tailor their lessons to meet all needs. Critical thinking is an intrinsic part of all lessons, along with real-world examples. Cross-curricular links are frequent and structured, and sometimes opportunistic, for example, when teachers encourage deeper thinking through high quality questioning. Expectations in all lessons are high.

The inclusion department staff collaborate with pupils, families and external specialists to produce clear, accurate, personalised and up-to-date pupil profiles which consistently inform teaching. As a result of regular curricular adaptations and deep knowledge of the pupils, teachers attune their lessons to meet pupils' needs. Teachers are beginning to use artificial intelligence to precisely tailor teaching to individual

pupils' needs. Teaching assistants are fully integrated into the lessons and diligently augment learning by leading small groups and supporting individuals as necessary.

Teachers have an excellent grasp of their subject and continually contribute to curriculum development. They use their knowledge to keep vocabulary accurate and specialised when necessary. For example, in Year 1, pupils are directly taught the scientific language of classifying materials using a range of characteristics.

Pupils' behaviour for learning is exemplary. Teaching is often gentle because the pupils are keenly motivated to work and succeed. Lessons in primary engender an excitement which never undermines learning. Pupils frequently exclaim their revelations in understanding. It is common that teachers enjoy lessons as much as the pupils do.

In secondary and the sixth form, pupils readily and confidently approach new and more complex concepts because they are well sequenced to build on prior learning. Pupils are diligent and use their learning skills to cooperate meaningfully in group discussions. The school effectively and fluently incorporates digital technology across the school.

Assessment is coherent, logical and intuitive. Both formative and summative data are carefully collected and analysed. In the early years, the innovative 'visible assessment records' provide a wealth of simple information to feed back into lesson planning and the school's data analysis tool. There is very effective feedback from assessment to curriculum adaptation. For example, when data showed girls outperforming boys in writing in Year 1, curriculum modification to engage boys more effectively resulted in closure of the gap. Year leaders take responsibility to monitor individual progress and link it to pastoral care when needed.

Teachers and leaders conduct moderation of internal assessments, giving justified confidence in their accuracy. Feedback to pupils is often verbal, but the whole class feedback sheets in primary monitor attainment and progress frequently. Although there is a comprehensive marking policy, teachers have the freedom to use it as a guide, so they can fully adapt practice to the needs of the pupils and work presented.

The school uses various data analysis tools in primary, secondary and the sixth form. These systems are effective, providing appropriate data and analysis for progress monitoring. Progress leaders identify anomalies in attainment and progress and follow these up to make improvements. Close and ongoing monitoring of the progress of individuals and groups contributes well to the effectiveness of lessons.

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

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils is outstanding. The school is a highly inclusive community where pupils and teachers embrace and celebrate the cultural diversity around them and focus on understanding the differences. All members of the school community work together in harmony and this creates a welcoming learning environment where respect for each other's background, faith and individuality are paramount.

Pupils of all ages demonstrate excellent self-esteem, resilience, confidence and behaviour for learning. They are friendly, supportive of each other and show increasing responsibility for their own learning. Children and pupils develop excellent understanding of the UK and UAE rules of law and how their actions can affect others, and this is very well evidenced in the way they show pride in their work and keep the school's environment free from litter. Pupils say that behaviour is excellent and they know how to keep themselves safe from cyber-bullying and social media. Pupils said, 'We are not perfect; we make mistakes, but we are full of kindness'. Pupils feel safe and secure, and are confident to ask for help whenever needed.

Pupils establish excellent relationships with their teachers and others. In early years, children help their friends and know that 'Sharing is caring'; showing sensitivity to all. The highly structured PSHE programme fully nurtures pupils' personal development, mental health and well-being. Children learn to express their feelings about things that matter to them. Across the school, the emotional literacy programme provides excellent opportunities for pupils to interact with one another. It supports their understanding of respect for people with different views.

Teachers and other staff provide an excellent range of learning experiences to help pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding about life beyond the school and to make consistent links with the wider world. They take part in cultural events locally and work with local, UK and international schools, including the Sparkle Foundation in Malawi. Pupils lead on a number of initiatives, for example, to raise funds to support their chosen charities such as Pink Day and to support other communities beyond their local environment. Pupils are enthusiastic about the roles they have in school such as

in managing the school newspaper in primary and digital magazine in secondary. They develop excellent leadership skills in the way they engage highly in projects to promote sustainability and conservation in their local community. They lead on projects such as a 'Change Maker' that has won them several awards, including the design of the water fountains in school and contributions to the design of Formula 1 cars, sponsorship and sustainability.

Pupils develop excellent knowledge about British institutions such as learning about British authors and conservationists, the British Empire, trade development and parliament. They take part in voting for the school councillors, house captains, vice captains, prefects and the well-being group and learn about the democratic process, fairness and justice. Pupils' voices are very well listened to as evident in the way the school has provided extra sport activities and competitions and play equipment to respond to their suggestions.

### **Standard 3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**

The welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff is outstanding.

From pre-admissions systems to the settling in period in school, staff monitor pupils' safety and well-being and respond quickly to need. The children joining early years learn safe routines very rapidly. Staff build a close working relationship with parents and carers quickly during and after admission.

The entire staff team works together to ensure that the school environment is safe at all times of the day. The school has a strong safeguarding culture.

Governors ensure that all relevant health and safety regulations and the policies relating to safety are effectively implemented. Risk assessments are comprehensive and risk reduction processes are excellent. The monitoring visits and advice of the owners, Cognita, are welcome, effective and knowledgeable.

The positive behaviour policy is logical and implemented in a manner which encourages personal responsibility. As a result, pupils' behaviour across the school is excellent. Bullying occurrences are rare, as the school adopts a restorative approach that demonstrates thoughtful and effective behaviour management. The leadership team keeps comprehensive records of all incidents.

Systems for monitoring and managing attendance are very effective. Coupled with the pupils love of learning and excellent relationships with parents, these characteristics produce attendance of over 97%, well above the England average.

Pupils receive information on how to keep themselves safe through assemblies and many cross-curricular discussions in lessons. The school's counsellor is active across the age range and is an integral part of the welfare team. Pupils know who to contact in the event of a difficulty and trust all adults to help them. Peers are also trained to offer help and know when to refer pupils' difficulties on to the responsible adults in school.

The school's clinic staff and counsellor work closely with academic staff to ensure pupils receive timely, comprehensive and effective services, if in difficulty.

Safeguarding arrangements meet the same expectations as schools in England, except where UAE laws and regulations make this impossible. Staff receive regular face-to-face safeguarding training and know how to manage disclosures.

Staff are confident in the school's systems to keep themselves and pupils safe. Levels of trust between pupils and staff are very high.

## **Standard 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The single central record tracker (SCRT) is currently being migrated to a secure Cognita online dashboard by the human resources (HR) section. Each staff member including teachers, support staff, volunteers, supply staff, outsourced companies and governors have a file on the SCRT. The school conducts rigorous checks including employment history, Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) approval, pre-employment personal information, identity check, attested qualifications, police checks and the right to work. The school checks the two references provided. Teachers sign a code of conduct from the Ministry of Education and a joining declaration.

The school maintains records of all safeguarding training which designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) plan and deliver face-to-face. All DSLs and their deputies have advanced safeguarding training. All senior leaders and HR have completed safer recruitment and anti-bribery and corruption training. Key members of staff have completed safer handling training.

Most teachers possess UK qualifications. In the current year, 18 new teachers started and all confirm that they feel integrated into the school. They are assigned mentors upon appointment and are welcomed and helped by their peers. They said, "I can't believe how lucky I am". The school will continue to recruit new teachers and leaders as the school grows by a further 200 pupils.

## **Standard 5. The premises and accommodation**

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The school fulfils all legal requirements and maintains a high level of accountability, including excellent record keeping. Fire evacuation policies are clear and continually updated to reflect changes in building layout and room usage. The school's owners ensure compliance with local and UK regulations around safety, and conduct frequent, regular and supportive spot-checks. Evacuation protocols are regularly practised and any modifications to practice required are swiftly enacted. The school keeps the swimming pool in excellent condition, implementing clear and robust safety protocols.

The medical base is appropriate and includes an isolation room. There is safe storage of medicines. The building is not yet fully accessible to those with restricted mobility, but staff work sympathetically to accommodate temporary physical difficulties, such as broken limbs.

The design of the building and surrounding area provides stimulating learning environments with bright spacious rooms and wide corridors with considerable natural light. Spaces are imaginatively used and continually adapted to the school's and pupils' needs. All learning areas are very well equipped with appropriate resources and provide a stimulating environment for all. Teachers also produce their own high-quality resources.

The dedicated team of cleaning and maintenance staff ensure the upkeep of the buildings and grounds to the highest standards. Staff and pupils take considerable pride in their school and show respect in the way they use the facilities. The whole school community shows respect for the building, resulting in it looking as clean and tidy at the end of the day as it is at the start.

Regular checks by the highly efficient operations team ensure the safe operation of the building. Outside spaces are well shaded and are meticulously maintained. School transport, including parent car parking, is very well supervised by site staff and school leaders.

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

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

The provision of information for parents, carers and others is of a high quality. The principal and other members of the leadership team have worked tirelessly to establish highly positive and meaningful partnerships with parents and to gain their trust. They show excellent commitment to working closely with parents to support their children's learning and development. The school involves parents in their children's education, consults them about the work of the school on a regular basis, and values their views. When leaders plan developments, the views and suggestions of parents are influential in defining priorities for the school. For example, the school responded positively to parents' suggestions for extra-curricular clubs including more sports competitions, dance and drama.

Discussions with parents show that they are highly supportive of the school and their children enjoy coming to school. These positive views were also confirmed during the meeting with their children and in surveys during the inspection.

Extensive channels of information including online, handbooks, brochures, newsletters and on the school's website keep parents very well informed about all aspects of the school's life.

Parents speak highly of the individually written, termly reports that they receive regarding their children's academic outcomes and their personal development and well-being. Open evenings and consultation meetings are popular and well attended. They provide excellent opportunities for parents to discuss their children's success with teachers and to provide them with guidance about next steps to promote learning. Parents of children with SEND or EAL confirm that their children are very well looked after and make the best possible progress of which they are capable. They comment that the leadership team, teachers and other staff are approachable, visible and extremely helpful. They appreciate the open-door policy to seek advice whenever needed.

The Friends of Horizon consists of parents who work closely with other families and the school. They organise coffee mornings and involve parents in activities that contribute fully to the life of the school. These include Breast Cancer awareness campaigns and supporting charities, such as Iftar for the local workers during Ramadan. They attend meetings with the senior leadership to conduct a scrutiny of books and to check the



progress that pupils make over time. The governing body includes parents and regularly invites all parents to make suggestions to influence the life of the school.

The school complies with all requirements relating to information, including policies, curriculum, support for pupils with SEND or EAL needs and how to contact the school and its owners.

The school provides a welcoming learning environment for all, where staff and pupils work with mutual respect, and where pupils learn and flourish.

## **Standard 7. The school's procedures for handling complaints**

The school meets the requirements of this standard.

Parents have access to the complaints policy on the school's website. The complaints policy is updated regularly and has very clear guiding principles for dealing with complaints promptly and effectively. These may be informal complaints, usually dealt with by the class teachers or formal written complaints referred to the principal. The school keeps records of all formal complaints and their resolution. In the current year, there has been one complaint which Cognita is currently dealing with. In the previous year, three written, minor complaints were resolved.

The principal is very visible around the school and at the school gate every day to greet pupils and parents. The principal and leaders ensure open communication with parents is paramount. As a result, almost all concerns are resolved informally due to the strong relationships established.

## **Standard 8. Leadership and management of the school**

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The leadership fulfils its responsibilities in ensuring that the BSO standards are fully met.

The principal and vice principal have been very successful in changing the culture of the school. There is now a very strong team, with all members invested in, and, without exception, proud to work at the school. Leaders communicate ambition and set high expectations. They lead by example and they are highly visible around the school.

The principal, on joining the school, developed the vision and mission with staff and, the values with pupils. 'Everyone Counts, Everyone Contributes, Everyone Succeeds' is fully understood by pupils as being the 'best version of themselves' and this was certainly witnessed around the school by inspectors. Parents are also very supportive of the vision.

Middle leaders have been largely recruited from within the school. All are very enthusiastic, and committed to their role and responsibilities. They know their own priorities for development based on an accurate analysis of data and a deep understanding of the curriculum. The head of early years is an assistant principal and along with two middle leaders, runs outstanding provision for children in the early years. Leaders at all levels have excellent capacity for further improvement.

The principal delivers training to middle leaders, many of whom go on to national college leadership qualifications. Teachers are keen to share practice with one another particularly through 'Sparks' sessions where staff have opportunities for professional discussions. Feedback from learning walks, peer and learning reviews encourage teams to improve.

Impact reviews allow teachers to have conversations about high quality teaching with their line managers and to set targets for development that align with the whole school development plan. Teachers state that they feel respected and valued and that leaders are open and transparent and that regular communication builds trust. All teachers who responded to the BSO survey, and those who inspectors spoke to, were wholly positive about their experience of the school. Inspectors saw this in committed staff who did their very best for their pupils. Staff morale is very high.

Accurate self-evaluation contributes to the whole school improvement plan and the plans of different departments and phases of the school. These plans have led to a positive impact on provision and raised outcomes. The improvement plan recognises the need to develop the skillset of newly appointed leaders that will become necessary as the school increases in size. Leaders value the opportunities for innovation and new ideas to further improve the experience and outcomes for pupils.

Governance is strong and is fully representative of the school community, with the voice of the pupil, parents and employees scheduled into meetings throughout the year. The acquisition by Cognita in 2022 has significantly improved the performance of the school through the contribution of the governing body. They have an educational understanding and are able to be critical friends. They also ensure the

school operates legally, is compliant with requirements and has clear financial policies. The sub-committees link to the four pillars of the quality framework; growth, operational excellence, holistic education and leadership and educational compliance.

The school is rigorously held to account through visits that evaluate the impact of initiatives on outcomes and the well-being of pupils. The separate responsibilities are respected, whilst providing guidance when requested. The principal's appraisal is undertaken by the Cognita CEO. Challenging targets are linked to the school's identified priorities and are monitored monthly.

The Cognita board also includes a safeguarding and inclusion expert who carries out annual independent two-day safeguarding reviews. Very high standards of safeguarding in line with the UK are evident. The school also benefits from legal counsel on the Cognita team and from strong links with the British embassy and police. Safeguarding is an agenda item at every meeting. The safeguarding governor works very closely with the DSLs in school.

Governors and leaders consistently promote and model equality and tackle discrimination in all they do. They champion inclusion and recognise all pupils as individuals.

## EYFS provision

The majority of children enter the early years aged three with knowledge and skills that are below England averages for their age. Overall, they make outstanding progress in relation to their different starting points in the required areas of learning and are highly prepared for Year 1.

Children make excellent progress in developing their personal, social and emotional skills, and the way they contribute to discussions in different contexts. In English, children can read unfamiliar words and sentences, and recall stories. In mathematics, children sing number rhymes, count, write numerals and learn to solve problems independently. In science, children enthusiastically explore resources around them and investigate how things work.

The leaders of early years have a clear sense of direction, work together to review and to implement the new curriculum, and to ensure the best outcomes for all children. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and know how children learn best. They observe children when they join the school to identify what children know, can do and

need to learn next. Teachers work in partnership with parents to share information. They use this information to plan exciting activities that motivate children to learn. Teachers provide a stimulating learning environment that promotes mutual respect for all. Resources are of a high quality and deployed very efficiently to accelerate children's learning. Teachers manage time effectively, engage in discussions with children and ask high quality questions to deepen the learning for all children.

Children are keen to learn and their behaviour is excellent. Children respond with enjoyment to learning as they sing songs, listen to music and read their favourite stories. They explore the excellent range of activities that motivate them to be creative and to foster their independent learning skills. Children work collaboratively with their peers and support each other. They enjoy outdoor activities and swimming sessions that encourage their physical development. Children take part in cultural events that deepen their understanding about the different people and cultures they come across. Parents agree that their children enjoy coming to school. Leaders and teachers give a high priority to children's supervision to keep them safe and secure.

## Post-16 provision

There are 40 pupils in the sixth form of which 30 are in Year 12. It has tripled in size since the previous year and continues to grow. Year 11 retention is 85%. Attendance is 98%, similar to the school's overall average this term.

A levels are offered in ten subjects and there is a significant take up of mathematics and English literature this year, but art and psychology are also popular. International extended project qualification (IEPQ) take-up is good in Year 13. Pupils' involvement in the school and wider community is encouraged, and they seize the opportunity to initiate their own ideas.

The school has a guidance and university counsellor who works closely with pupils to help with options choices and university applications. They visit local universities and attend university fairs. All pupils go on to university either locally in the UAE, the UK or worldwide. Work experience and internships are also facilitated by the school for Year 13 students.

All pupils are very well supported individually both personally and academically. Pupils said that the most important aspect of the school is how much everyone is given the same opportunities and recognised for their contribution to the community. They felt the close-knit school community really embodies its values. They certainly felt listened to and that changes had been made for the benefit of all.

The assistant principal for secondary is the sixth form leader, assisted by two tutors. They maintain a presence in the dedicated hub which has study and recreational spaces, a kitchen and roof space. They are good role models and have trust in their pupils to behave appropriately.

Leaders have focused on pupils' greater involvement in improving their own learning skills. Pupils' communication and independence skills observed in lessons were particularly strong. They have extremely positive attitudes towards learning, leading to excellent outcomes. In discussions, they were effusive about their experience, and passionate and positive about their teachers with whom they have excellent relationships.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

Horizon International School meets all of the required standards except those that would be in breach of the host country's laws. The requirements of the host country take precedence.

It cannot fully meet the standards that relate to 2(2)(d)(ii). Horizon College International encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age; disability; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

## What the school could do to improve further

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

The school has approval to increase in size by a further 200 pupils, much of which will be in the secondary school. Leaders should use this period to embed and develop the skillset of new leaders. As a result, opportunities for change and innovation across the school will be maximised, with sustained, improved outcomes for pupils.

## Summary of inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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### 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			
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### Leadership and management

Overall effectiveness of leadership and management	X			
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## School Details

<b>Name of school</b>	Horizon International School
<b>Type of school</b>	Private
<b>Date school opened</b>	2008
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 18 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	1385
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	n/a
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	36,289 – 68,336 AED
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	n/a
<b>Address of school</b>	Street 9A, Off Al Wasl road, Umm Al Sheif Dubai UAE PO Box 126108
<b>Telephone number</b>	+971 4 348 3314
<b>Email address</b>	Reception@hisdubai.ae
<b>Headteacher</b>	Darren Gale
<b>Proprietor</b>	Cognita Middle East Opco Holdings Limited.

## 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 (or DSIB inspection in Dubai) 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.

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB)** – All private schools in Dubai are required by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority to be inspected by the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB). A joint DSIB/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 Her 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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Education Development Trust  
16-18 Duke Street  
Reading  
RG1 4RU  
UK

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