



Inspection report

Durham School for Girls

**Doha
Qatar**

Date

29 – 31 May 2022

Inspection

20220529

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1. Purpose and scope of the inspection

The Department for Education has put in place a voluntary scheme for the inspection of British schools overseas, whereby schools are inspected against a common set of standards that British schools overseas can choose to adopt.

The inspection and this report follow the Department for Education (DFE) schedule for the inspection of British Schools overseas.

The purpose of the inspection is to provide information to parents, teachers, senior managers and the school's management on the overall effectiveness of the school, the standard of education it provides and its compatibility with independent schools in the United Kingdom.

The inspection and report will cover the key areas of quality of the curriculum; quality of teaching and learning; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils; their welfare, health and safety; the suitability of the proprietor and staff; the school's premises and accommodation (including boarding); and the school's complaints procedures. An essential part of the inspection is considering the extent to which the British character of the school is evident in its ethos, curriculum, teaching, care for pupils and pupils' achievements.

This inspection was completed by Penta International. Penta International is approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting schools overseas. As one of the leading inspection providers, Penta International reports to the English Department for Education (DFE) on the extent to which schools meet the standards for British Schools Overseas.

During the inspection visit, over 45 lesson observations took place, as well as a series of learning walks. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Pupils' workbooks were scrutinised, and discussions were held with the senior staff, the management team, and a range of teachers, parents and groups of pupils. The inspection team were in school for three days.

The lead inspector was Karen Hanratty. The team members in school were Lesley Birtwell and Sarah Pearce. Shannon Koga joined the inspection team remotely.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

Durham School for Girls, Doha meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas.

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

Durham School for Girls, Doha (DSGD) provides a good level of education. Pastoral care is outstanding; the welfare of students is a key school priority. The behaviour of the students is excellent, relationships are strong. Teaching is good, as a result, students make progress in their learning. The curriculum blends UK and Qatari requirements extremely well. The leadership provided by the principal and other leaders, is strong.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths at the school, including the following:

- The students, who are well-behaved, polite and show pride in being part of the Durham School for Girls community
- The ethos of the school, which is warm and welcoming, providing an emotionally safe environment for students
- The clear and well embedded MARK values, motto and vision, which drive the school and are understood by all stakeholders
- The understanding displayed by the senior leadership team of the school's strengths and development priorities, focused on raising student's achievement
- The teachers, who are committed to pupils' overall development and provide a warm and supportive learning environment
- The high levels of pastoral care and the PSHE curriculum which leads to a safe and happy school environment in which students develop self-confidence and self-esteem
- The school campus, which provides a range of facilities for specialist teaching, and is well matched to the needs of pupils and demands of the curriculum
- Relationships and communications with parents, and the school's responsiveness to any concerns raised
- The blending of Qatari and British values, and high levels of respect for local culture and traditions
- The importance placed up, and processes around child protection and safeguarding
- The financial support and strategic guidance provided by the governing board and the confidence they place in the senior leadership team (SLT) to lead the school

3.2 Points for improvement

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

1. Ensure all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential, by:
 - Raising levels of attendance and punctuality, which impact directly on progress and attainment
 - Evaluating and embedding initiatives in teaching and learning, including SEND practices, HPL, Read Write Inc, Talk for Writing and assessment for learning
 - Increasing the level of challenge for all, but particularly the most able students
 - Developing consistent strategies for the monitoring and tracking of assessment data, in order to develop a picture of attainment and progress over time
2. Refine the performance management cycle, to incorporate the monitoring of teaching and learning with professional development targets that are linked to overall school development aims, as well as personal professional targets
3. To make better use of learning environments and classroom displays to promote independence, and stimulate, support and celebrate learning.

4. The context of the school

Full name of School	Durham School for Girls, Doha			
Address	Building 91, Street 970, Zone 36, Al Messila, Doha			
Telephone Number/s	+976 4036 2938			
Fax Number	N/A			
Website Address	www.durhamqatar.com			
Key Email Address/s	Info@durhamqatar.com			
Headteacher/Principal	Vanessa Jane Whay			
Chair of Board of Governors/Proprietor	Chairman of the Governors – Nicholas Millen (Durham UK) Proprietors – Mohamed Dobashi, Saad Almuhanadi			
Age Range	3-18 years			
Total number of pupils	1,185	Boys	0	Girls
Numbers by age	0-2 years	0	12-16 years	343
	3-5 years	260	17-18 years	6
	6-11 years	576	18+ years	0
Total number of part-time children	0			

Durham School for Girls, Doha, is situated in the Al Messila district of Doha. The school was established in August 2019, the first all-girls British school in Qatar. The school enjoys a close relationship with its sister school in Durham, United Kingdom (UK). The shared values, British traditions, curriculum and pastoral system are the cores linking these two seemingly diverse communities. Alongside these run operational links between the two schools at all levels, from joint student projects to governance.

The school is housed in a purpose-built campus, which provides attractive, light and airy accommodation and facilities. The comprehensive facilities support the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum for all age groups.

Since opening, the school has seen a period of rapid growth, despite the difficulties presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. From 470 primary and year 7 girls, the school now has close to its original capacity of 1,200 across all age groups from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to year 12. The summer of 2022 will see the school's first set of external exam results and school graduates. The school has gained a strong reputation within Qatar, with Qatari students making up 98% of the school population. The campus provides an all-female environment.

The school follows a strong moral code, set out in the MARK values (Moral integrity, Ambition, Responsibility and Kindness). These link to the school's motto of 'Confidence for Life', as well as the school's vision and mission.

The school identifies some challenges:

- Competition from 2 other recently opened British all-girls schools
- Attendance and punctuality of students
- Ensuring that the curriculum is in line with Qatari values and Ministry of Education (MoE) ethics, whilst ensuring breadth and range of subjects
- Consistently providing sufficient challenge for the most able students, particularly through online learning
- Developing reliable and robust data over time, after an extended period of online learning
- Recruitment and retention of staff to ensure school stability
- Moving into the next stage of development, from 'founding school' to 'developed school', whilst maintaining high reputation and values

4.1 British nature of the school

The school is proud of its strong links to Durham UK and the rich history and culture of its British roots. British values are prominently displayed around the school, and the connection between these and the school's MARK values are emphasised. British culture is evident in pictures of features of the UK, such as life-size red telephone boxes. Celebrations for the platinum jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II are evident around the school, with a portrait competition and plans for a jubilee tea party.

The value of democracy is strongly upheld through the student leadership structure of the school. The student council members are elected by their peers. Leadership opportunities abound, from classroom level to whole school. A head and deputy head girl, prefects and house captains have prominent roles within the school.

The school's house system is very strong. The five houses mirror those of Durham school in the UK, but are named after Qatari national animals to bring relevant context. Everyone in the school, with the exception of the principal, is allocated to a house. Siblings are placed in the same house to strengthen house loyalty. House points and competitions add excitement. In Key Stage (KS) 3, all subjects are taught in mixed ability house groups. Once a week, house shirts can be worn in place of school uniform.

The structure of the school replicates the British system, with year groups and key stages aligned to UK age requirements. Schemes of work follow the National Curriculum of England and Early Years Foundation Stage programme. Assessments in place across the school replicate those of a school in the UK, culminating in iGCSE, AS and A level. Teaching is based on best UK practice with age-appropriate lesson structure and activities. High quality teaching resources and classroom furniture are sourced from the UK.

All teachers are either UK trained or have relevant prior experience of delivering the National Curriculum. Continuous professional development (CPD) is sourced through UK providers, online or face-to-face and is aligned to UK initiatives. Some senior leaders have completed relevant National Professional Qualifications (NPQ).

The school's website and all written documentation is in English; a significant amount is also translated to ensure understanding. Written reports on students' academic performance and social and emotional development are shared with parents three times a year. Parent teacher meetings to discuss students' progress are also held regularly. All teaching and administration staff speak English confidently. The school is an active member of British Schools of the Middle East (BSME).

5. Standard 1

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided is good. As a result of a comprehensive curriculum and good teaching, students make good progress towards age related expectations. The school fully meets the standards for BSO.

5.1 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good and provides solid foundations for students' learning.

The school follows the 2014 National Curriculum of England, along with the EYFS programme for the younger students. This is blended with Qatari curriculum requirements for Arabic, Islamic studies and natural history, and adapted as appropriate to suit the local context. Schemes of work are clearly thought out and well planned. In primary, a cross-curricular approach unites humanities, science, literacy, art and music into engaging themes. In secondary, all lessons are delivered by subject specialists.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. The EYFS program encourages independent learning in all key areas, focusing on manipulative play and free choice, whilst developing basic skills in the seven areas of learning. Within primary, strategies recently adopted include '*Read, Write Inc*', '*Talk for Writing*' and '*Maths No Problem*'. Lessons incorporate phonics, English, and mathematics, beside the theme-based curriculum.

In secondary a range of over 15 subjects is available in iGCSE and AS level. Options include travel and tourism, fashion and design, and business, which meet the interests and possible career options of many students. The innovative Dual Diploma Program allows students in years 11, 12 and 13 to complete university courses at the State University of New York (SUNY) whilst still in the school. Through the creative use of technology and space, students and teachers from the university interact directly.

A broad and varied programme of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum. Options include mathematical art, choir, Zumba, and cake icing. Off site visits provide further opportunities for students to deepen their learning beyond the classroom. The school has recently become a Microsoft Showcase School, adding further opportunities for students to explore and excel in the field of information technology (IT).

High Performance Learning (HPL) allows all students to access the curriculum from their starting points, building on prior knowledge. The learning skills and mindsets developed through HPL allow students to develop confidence and resilience in learning. Although not yet fully embedded, the impact of HPL is already becoming evident around the school.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is good; there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching was strongest in some secondary lessons.

Detailed planning, including learning objectives and success criteria, is in place, ensuring consistency between classes and progression over time. For example, year 4 students' books showed progression in learning leading to the final task of writing a play script. Learning is shared with parents through '*Class Dojo*'. Learning behaviours are excellent; students say that they enjoy school and learning is fun. Clear expectations, calm classroom management and good relationships promote effective learning.

In the best lessons teachers scaffold learning well using a variety of teaching techniques. They plan exciting, multi-sensory and engaging activities that enthuse learners. In a reception phonics lesson, a variety of fast paced activities reinforced learning of the sound 'a'. In year 7 English, the provision of information, discussion, paired talk, writing task and sharing of writing gave students confidence in their learning about pathos. Students interviewed commented, "Teachers work hard to help us learn."

Most lessons involve teachers modelling, demonstrating and explaining lesson content. In the best lessons, teachers make good use of open-ended questioning. Extended talk challenges students to think deeply and develop language skills. For example, year 2 students shared ideas and made predictions using correct scientific language, about whether glass would be a good material to use to make a pair of gloves.

Opportunities for working together and discussion enable students to think whilst developing skills of collaboration, independent learning, tolerance and mutual respect. In a year 1 phonics lesson, the teacher modelled working with a partner, thus enabling students to successfully work in pairs, take turns and help each other. The use of talk partners enables students to clarify ideas, extend language and build confidence. For example, reception students rehearsed their sentences in pairs. In a year 7 English lesson, students shared their understanding of persuasive language thinking about when, where and how they would use it.

In most lessons, teaching is aimed at the majority of students; as a result, there is often a lack of challenge, particularly for the most able. However, in the best lessons differentiation to meet the needs of all learners is evident. In year 2 science, a group of students was challenged to observe how a piece of fabric changed from transparent, to translucent, to opaque, as they kept folding it. In a year 9 mathematics lesson on averages, the class were given the numerical value of the mode, mean and median,

together with how many numbers were in the sequence. From this they worked together to calculate what the five numbers were.

HPL is becoming embedded across the school, and starting to impact on students' confidence, attributes for and attitudes to learning. In discussion, a KS 2 student stated: "In maths I thought of Maisie (the meta-cognitive elephant) and used my intellectual confidence to stand up at the board and answer the question".

Resources are used well to support learning, for example, clocks, writing prompts, vocabulary sheets and video clips. The classroom environment and displays could be used more effectively to enable students to develop self-help and independent learning skills. In all lessons, teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) give support and check on the understanding of individuals and groups of students.

Direct teaching in EYFS enables children to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills. In nursery, a well-matched activity encouraged counting to 10 through on-to-one correspondence, recognising numerals and matching groups of the same amount. Although activities for continuous provision are set up, observed teaching showed limited opportunities for independent and self-directed learning.

Assessment of learning to measure attainment is well established, with end of unit tests and assessments; leaders report that this information is used to amend provision. For example, year 5 students were invited to work with a teaching assistant based on the teacher's prior knowledge of their understanding of shape. In some lessons, teachers use starter and other activities to assess and reinforce prior learning. Assessment data demonstrates that students make good progress. The addition of standardised testing next year, including 'CAT4' and 'GL progress tests', will provide robust data, leading to greater analysis, monitoring and tracking of students' attainment and progress.

Assessment for learning is not yet embedded or consistent; this is an area of development. As a result, most students do not understand how to improve or extend their learning. Teachers mark students work to indicate if it is correct, however, there is little formative feedback to indicate next steps in learning. In primary, teachers and students highlight their work against success criteria, this initiative is becoming established. In the best lessons, students are involved in self and peer assessment. For example, year 8 drama students who created news flashes relating to Rosa Parks, fed back to their peers on strengths, and how the presentations could have been improved.

Assessment effectively supports the progress of children with additional needs. Individual education plans (IEPs), intervention support records and student progress discussions are based on a clear understanding of need. They include targets and strategies to address the need. Evaluations identify what has been achieved and next steps. The newly appointed SENCo is in the process of enhancing this practice, so that students are aware of their targets, progress and next steps.

5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

The standards achieved by students meets the standard for BSO. Students in the school make good progress from their starting points. Attainment is acceptable, with many students working below age related expectations (AREs).

Students' behaviour across the school is good, as a result of a strong moral code which reinforces expectations. Students are polite and enjoy strong relationships, both with their peers and teachers. Attitudes to learning are generally positive, although a lack of confidence impacts of the achievement of some pupils. Attendance and punctuality are areas of concern for school leaders; steps are being taken to improve these, following detailed data analysis of the impact of non-attendance on students' achievement.

In EYFS, KS1 and 2, attainment is satisfactory and progress is good. Attainment is lower than age equivalent pupils in the UK. There is currently no data to compare the pupils' progress over time. At the end of EYFS, 62% of pupils are at AREs, below the UK average of 71.8%. However, there is evidence of accelerated progress for many, as only 30% of pupils were meeting expectations for their age at the beginning of the year. A similar pattern of attainment and progress is evident in KS1 and 2 in reading, writing and maths.

Following an extended period of online learning due to Covid-19, the school identified a significant decline in students' reading and phonics abilities. Steps have been taken to rectify this, including the implementation of structured phonics teaching and a focus on literacy skills across the curriculum. NGRT reading tests show considerable improvement in reading levels between October 2021 and May 2022, although few students achieve higher levels.

Departments in secondary conduct regular assessments and use this data to identify students' needs. However, there is currently no consistent system in place. As this year will see the first set of external examinations, no historic data for iGCSE or AS level is available. Mock iGCSE exams indicate that students are currently working at levels below those of their peers in the UK. However, most students are on track to attain in line with Qatari MoE school leaving expectations.

Plans are in place to introduce standardised testing across the school next year. Baseline levels will be established in August, using 'CAT 4' in alternate year groups. 'PASS' assessments will measure students' attitudes to school and learning across the school. GL '*Progress through maths*' and '*Progress through English*' will also be introduced in the primary school. The use of '*Pupil Asset*' will allow teachers to track individual students' attainment and progress, as well as identify gaps in learning in classes and cohorts.

Students are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education and life.

6. Standard 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent; it is a key strength of the school.

Pupils develop awareness and understanding of social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) aspects through a planned curriculum programme, assemblies, extra-curricular activities and many positions of responsibility. The MARK values and HPL attributes for learning underpin the curriculum and are embedded in school life. A wide range of extra-curricular activities covering sports, arts, wellbeing and Arabic provide a broad educational experience, enabling students to develop as well-rounded individuals. There is something for everyone. Students are confident and articulate; they demonstrate high levels of self-esteem and self-knowledge; epitomised by the school as 'The Durham Girl'.

The embedded MARK values create a strong sense of community and students are helped to link these values with British values. In a year 2 assembly, the teacher demonstrated how British values of democracy, the rule of law, mutual tolerance and respect could be linked to each MARK value that students described. A 'what if' discussion about responding to dropped litter provided an excellent opportunity to promote respect and tolerance for others.

The many opportunities to develop students' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence extend their spiritual awareness. High profile displays linked to the MARK values and HPL, in student friendly language, enable students to reflect on their own learning and be proud of their efforts and achievements. When interviewed, students explained how an all-girls environment enables them to enjoy school more, because they feel confident and comfortable. One girl summed it up, saying: "The school has made me brave." Parents reinforced this view.

Students are encouraged to reflect on their own religion and other spiritual areas of their lives in creative and imaginative ways. Models displayed related to Islamic studies. The art curriculum covers a wide range of styles and techniques. For example, the work of Patricia Ariel who combined figurative, geometric and expressionist abstracts, offer opportunities for spiritual reflection.

Students demonstrate strong moral values through excellent behaviour in lessons and around the school. For example, a student was observed picking up litter on the stairs. When thanked she responded: "I didn't like to see it lying there." Leaders describe the school as a 'safe place to make mistakes' and, through restorative justice, students are encouraged to think carefully about their decisions, actions and consequences. Curriculum opportunities enable students to appreciate differing viewpoints. For example, KS3 students considered endangered species in Qatar and the wider world. Year 8 students, studying Hamlet, were asked to consider responses to madness and revenge. The personal, social and health education (PSHE)

curriculum enables students to consider issues related to friendships, emotional well-being, healthy lifestyles and moral issues. For example, Qatari police spoke to students about the laws and consequences around social media use.

An understanding of democracy, leadership and citizenship is developed through many opportunities and processes including student councils, head girls, prefects and HPL mentors, enabling students to develop leadership and communication skills. The primary head girl explained she was appointed after a presentation to the school, vote and selection interview with school leaders. Student council teams focus on different areas of the MARK values, organising events, hosting competitions and leading assemblies. Initiatives have included a Quran competition, Healthy Day and jubilee celebrations. Prefects support younger students at breaktimes. HPL leaders act as peer tutors. The student voice is strong and it makes a difference. Students are proud of their school, especially the opportunities and responsibilities they are given.

The school empowers women, and students are introduced to female role models, for example, Rosa Parks and female artists. Students are ambitious, self-confident and rise to leadership challenges. Students in years 9 and 11 spoke of ambitions to attend universities in Qatar and abroad, and were confident that the school would help them achieve their goals. The primary head girl described her leadership role as supporting staff and her peers, stating that she is proud to help enforce uniform standards, talk to visitors and support peers who are having difficulties, either helping them resolve the situation or asking for help from adults.

Students learn about and value their own culture through the formal curriculum (Arabic, Islamic studies and Qatari natural history), extra-curricular activities (Arabic art and craft, morals from the Quran), visits and celebrations. Qatari culture is highly visible. For example, displays in both Arabic and English, respecting Ramadan, the Qatari flag, large images of Qatari leaders and National Day celebrations. Students learn about life in Doha, have experienced a variety of Middle Eastern food and visited the Media Centre for Youth. Parents speak highly of the way the school respects the Qatari culture and religion.

Curriculum opportunities and celebrations enable students to explore British and other cultures. The school actively promotes tolerance, a respect for human differences and acceptance of a range of lifestyles: this is achieved within the laws of the host country. In a year 8 drama lesson, students prepared and presented a one-minute newsflash on the Rosa Parks bus boycott. The whole school celebration for the Queen's Jubilee enabled students to consider all things British as well as dress up as members of the British royal family. Reception children look at the work of Rene Magritte, a Belgium surrealist artist, and create 'Son of Man' pictures replacing faces with fruit images. Secondary students study Hamlet and compare the works of different artists including Patricia Ariel and Antonio Mora.

7. Standard 3

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for welfare, health and safety is good, it meets the standard for BSO. The school has an appropriate range of policies and practices in place.

Child safety, safeguarding, wellbeing and mental health are of the utmost importance for the school. Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS) is used to log, track and share information appropriately, and all staff are trained in its use. Two designated safeguarding leaders (DSLs) run this efficiently. The safeguarding team meets monthly, or as required. All staff receive annual safeguarding training, in English or Arabic. A school counsellor is available and students may see her without referral. Any well-being concerns are handled and discussed with parents in a culturally sensitive manner. Webinars, newsletters and forums with the parent representative group are all working towards educating parents about the importance of student welfare and wellbeing.

A behaviour policy, supported by a rewards and sanctions policy, is in place at the school. Students report that bullying does not happen in the school. One student stated that her class is: “Like a family, I have 26 sisters in my classroom”. The issue of online and cyber safety is addressed through curriculum lessons, PSHE and assemblies. Through a range of strategies, including external speakers sharing their personal experiences in order for the students to understand the impact of their online actions. Special focus weeks educate and raise awareness, including mental health awareness, anti-bullying and online safety.

A school management system, *‘Engage’*, is used to track absence and punctuality; attendance is a concern in the school, and a variety of strategies are being used to encourage families to improve attendance.

An appropriate health and safety policy is in place. The health and safety officer works with the facilities manager to ensure that building meet all local and UK standards. Systems are in place for reporting hazards and maintenance issues. The building, including the fire safety equipment, CCTV, alarms and emergency lighting are all compliant with local regulations. Fire drills are conducted regularly. Cleaning and maintenance are outsourced. The work is overseen by the facilities manager to ensure high standards are maintained at all times.

The medical clinic is well-equipped and accessible to all students. First aid kits are available in all areas of the school for minor incidents. A first aid policy is in place. The nurse takes part in the education of the girls around changes to their body in planned sessions at appropriate ages, and the girls feel comfortable visiting her when needed. Medicines are stored securely.

Risk assessment policies are in place for on-site activities and external visits. Site security is being enhanced with the introduction of identification cards, and a period of education, implementation and embedding will help to ensure the safety of the campus for all girls.

8. Standard 4

The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The suitability of the proprietor and staff meets the standard for BSO.

Strong links exist with Durham School, UK; an annual quality assurance visit is conducted by governors from Durham. The school's MARK values and vision are a common core which binds the two schools. The school's local owners are proactive in guiding the strategic direction of the school. Significant investment and sound financial management ensure that high quality facilities, staff and resources are in place to provide a good education for girls in Qatar.

Thorough recruitment procedures, including use of a recruitment partner, advertising, interview, references and a probationary period ensure that teachers are qualified and fit to teach their current age group and subject areas. Rigorous background and health checks are conducted, and the right to work in Qatar established before an appointment is confirmed. Teachers have clear job descriptions outlining their role. All teachers delivering the English curriculum have UK qualifications or relevant experience in a British school. Senior leaders have qualifications from the NPQ suite.

Before arrival of new teachers, staff handbooks and the sharing of information informally ensures staff are aware of cultural differences, dress code and expectations of behaviour. Communications are warm and welcoming, setting the tone for positive relationships between leadership and staff. On arrival in Qatar, an induction programme effectively informs newly appointed teachers about the school's values, vision and mission, as well as safeguarding, curriculum and matters related to classroom practice.

Lesson observations conducted regularly allow leaders to monitor the quality of teaching across the school and provide support to individual teachers as needed. Teaching is evaluated according to the UK teaching standards. A programme of professional development keeps teachers up to date on school initiatives and key school priorities. The school is aware of the need to develop the performance management cycle further, to link teacher evaluations and targets more closely to school priorities as well as individual professional aims.

Administration teams are led by specialists in their field, bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience to areas such as human resources (HR), IT and accounts.

The head of HR maintains a single central register of all staff working at the school. The register includes an IPCP check or equivalent for both local and overseas staff. The school receives confirmation from contractors that similar background checks are conducted. The central register is well documented and stored securely. It was made available to the inspection team.

9. Standard 5

The premises and accommodation

Premise and accommodation of the school meets the standards for BSO.

The purpose-built school building is bright, spacious and organised to ensure logical flow around the school. There is a generous amount of space which is, for the most part, well utilised to enhance learning and teaching. Facilities for drama, art, fashion and textiles, science laboratories, and sports, support a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for students. All areas of the school are well maintained and meet health and safety standards.

The temperature of the building is suitable in all spaces, and the acoustics and sound proofing of each room effective. Classrooms are well-lit and resourced with interactive whiteboards, as well as concrete materials to support learning.

The main school building is accessible to those with mobility issues, with disabled toilet facilities, ramps and wide doorways throughout, and two lifts between the ground and first floor. This is not the case for the upper floor of the Durham wing, which currently has no disabled access.

The shared spaces in the school celebrate both the British nature of the school, as well as the Qatari culture of the community. They also reflect the Durham way, setting the school apart from others in the city and embracing its identity.

Suitable toilet facilities are found throughout the building, equipped with adequate supplies of cold and warm water, as are changing rooms where appropriate, with private cubicles for students. The medical clinic is well-equipped for the examination and treatment of pupils, with a private treatment room. There are prayer rooms with washing facilities nearby, as well as water fountains throughout the campus.

The IT infrastructure is strong, with adequate internet access for all devices provided, either by school or through the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program. A skilled team is in place to support with hardware and software, as well as to strategically develop this area to support learning and the daily running of the school.

The school leaders are aware that the learning environment and displays would benefit from further development, to ensure it best supports teaching and learning, is an inspiring and motivating place for girls to learn, and to encourage them to take pride in their work and school.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information provided by the school to parents, prospective parents and its wider community is wide-ranging in style and breadth. It meets the requirements for BSO.

The school prides itself on the strength of home-school communications. Parents are given email addresses for teachers and SLT, as well as a WhatsApp group with the principal. Staff are available for informal conversations, or more formal meetings by appointment, at the start and end of the school day.

The school has a comprehensive website which provides a good level of detail about the school including the school structure, curriculum, activities and key policies. A parent portal allows secure access to students' progress reports, attendance records and other confidential material. All general information and communications are shared in both English and Arabic. The use of Class Dojo in primary leads to clear communication by virtue of its automatic translation facility.

Parent opinions and feedback are gathered through a school satisfaction survey, which is conducted twice annually. Meetings and workshops, whether online or in-person, provide an opportunity for teachers to share information about the curriculum, behaviour, and more. In primary, the use of a home school diary allows for key information to be shared between home and school on a daily basis. School newsletters are shared electronically through '*Engage*'. Social medial covers achievements, daily life and celebrations.

The 'Mums of Durham' is a group of mothers who meet weekly with the principal for reflection on the progress and developments within the school. With the need to build a strong community post-pandemic, these informal sessions are designed to build relationships, focus on happenings in the community and the well-being of the students. The group has effectively clarified questions concerning the British curriculum and return to face-to-face learning.

11. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

The school's procedure for handling complaints meets the standard for BSO. A comprehensive policy is in place which guides parents, school leaders and governors. This is available on the school's website or from the school office.

The school aims to resolve any concerns raised by parents informally. In the first instance, a parent should report their complaint to the child's class teacher or tutor. A written record is kept of all complaints raised, including the date when the matter was first brought to the school's attention. The school intends to solve most issues within 10 working days, however, if this is not possible, the complaint is escalated to the head of year or key stage leader. Following this, matters can be referred to the heads of primary, secondary or Arabic and Islamic studies, as appropriate.

Should the matter not be resolved informally, the parents are requested to put their complaint in writing to the principal. Should the complaint be about the principal, the matter is assigned to a member of the governing board. The principal will contact parents to discuss the matter within five working days. An investigation may be carried out to ascertain all the facts of the case. Once the principal has evaluated the situation, she will inform parents in writing of her decision, giving reasons. Any parents still unsatisfied with the outcome may request a panel hearing of the matter.

The complaints panel consists of three people, two of whom are school governors. The third person is independent of the management and running of the school. A hearing is scheduled, normally within 10 working days. The panel may request additional information and investigations into the matter before the hearing. The parent/s may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person, should they so wish. The panel will weigh up all the facts and reach a decision, which is communicated to the parents in writing. This is a final decision on the matter.

In line with MoE policy, parents may take a complaint directly to the Ministry, without going through the school's internal process first. In such cases, a Ministry representative will liaise directly with the principal to investigate the complaint and resolve the matter. Six formal complaints have been raised in this manner; all resolved rapidly.

At all stages, written records are kept of complaints, meetings and actions taken. A record of the number of formal complaints registered will be made available to parents and prospective parents on request.

The school complaints policy also outlines steps which would be taken for dealing with persistent or vexatious complaints, or harassment in school.

12. Standard 8

Leadership and management of the school

The leadership and management of the school is good, offering clear direction and support to all stakeholders. Students are happy at school and make progress. Morale is high and positivity infectious.

Care has been taken since the school was first established, to create a culture and ethos which is warm and welcoming. Relationships are a strength of the school; students, parents and teachers are greeted with a smile on arrival to school every day. The school's MARK values and motto, 'Confidence for Life', frame expectations. Through careful nurturing, students develop into young women ready to take their place as leading women in Qatari society. Safeguarding and child-protection are at the core of the school. Communications with parents are a strength.

Over time, leadership roles have developed in the school under the guidance of the principal. The SLT are united in purpose, there is a good deal of commonality in policies and practices in the primary and secondary sections. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the key strengths and development priorities of the school, based on robust self-evaluation. As a growing school, the leadership structure is developing. The addition of two deputy heads to both primary and secondary sections next year will add further capacity for improvement.

Leaders understand the factors that impact on students' achievement and other outcomes, and have compiled comprehensive plans to promote these. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, steps were taken to accelerate students' progress in reading and phonics, which have shown a positive impact. The school is putting in place a cycle of standardised assessments, analysis of attainment and progress data, monitoring and tracking, which will provide concrete evidence, and allow the school to target support and challenge where it is most needed.

Senior leaders are aware of the need for continuing staff development. A cycle of lesson observations and feedback, based on the UK teacher standards, is in place. Teachers and observers create targets for improvement, which are later reviewed. The school is aware that further developments of the performance management cycle, linking targets and CPD to overall school aims as well as personal professional development, is the next step in this process.

The local Qatari governing board, and Durham UK, provide appropriate checks and measures for the school, as well as support and guidance for the school's strategic development. Finances are managed effectively, to ensure high quality facilities, staffing and resources, to aid the school's effectiveness.

The school runs very well on a day-to-day basis. Systems and procedures are in place in all aspects of school operation, and people understand their role within the organisation.