

Inspection report

King Fahad Academy

Independent school

DfES ref no: 307/6068

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 13 – 16 March 2006

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

The King Fahad Academy was founded in September 1985 with the aim of providing schooling of the highest standard, acceptable to both Saudi and British Educational authorities, for the children of Saudi diplomats, as well as the children of Arabs and Muslims in London. The Academy consists of five schools: the nursery, the boys' lower school, the girls' lower school and the boys' and girls' upper schools.

The school has undergone great changes in the last eight years. In 1998 the decision was taken to bring the Academy into line with other Saudi International Schools offering the full Saudi curriculum. Those who remained in English curriculum classes have been allowed to complete their studies to university entrance level. Many pupils are the children of diplomats, and one of the main aims of the academy is to ensure that all its pupils are bilingual in Arabic and English. Accordingly, it was decided in 2005 to introduce the International Baccalaureate system, through the Primary Years, Middle Years and Diploma Years Programmes.

Currently, the school timetable provides subjects reflecting Saudi and English education at Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4. Pupils have studied General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and, currently, a few take General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations at Advanced level in a small sixth form, which is being phased out.

Summary of main findings

King Fahad Academy is a satisfactory school with some good features and some that do not completely meet regulatory requirements. Its curriculum, although in a state of change, provides its pupils with a balanced education and opportunities to develop their intellect and skills. The quality of teaching is mostly good, and, in each school, there is a trend towards improved quality with increasing ages of pupils. Pupils' achievement and progress reflect the quality of the teaching. The rapid changes to the curriculum have been introduced to bring it more in line with the needs of all its pupils. The introduction of the International Baccalaureate curriculum has required a change in the languages used for teaching and learning. These developments have been accompanied by major changes in staffing, along with disruptions of administration and of the timetable. This has led to concerns in the last year amongst pupils and parents. The school has sought to improve communication and the provision of information for parents. It sets a high priority on pupils' welfare, health and safety.

What the school does well:

- it provides a good Islamic education;
- pupils' accomplishment in Arabic is particularly good;
- it provides some excellent secondary teaching;
- it has particular success at all levels in engendering enthusiasm for science; and
- the nursery provides excellent opportunities for children to develop good behaviour and healthy lifestyles, fostering good personal and social and emotional development.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:

- *improve the curriculum and its documentation as detailed in section 1 of this report;*
- *improve the assessment of pupils' progress and use this information to support the planning of teaching;*
- *fully implement its written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;*
- *improve health and safety procedures as detailed in section 3 of this report;*
- *keep written records of sanctions imposed on pupils for serious disciplinary offences;*
- *improve the procedures for the checking of the suitability of staff as indicated in section 4 of this report; and*
- *provide further information to parents regarding the complaints procedure as detailed in section 6 of this report.*

What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002

In order to fulfil its duties under the DDA, the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school is in a transitional phase of introducing the International Baccalaureate education system. It consists of three structures: the Primary Years Programme (PYP), the Middle Years Programme and the Diploma Years Programme.

The girls' and boys' lower school uses the PYP Guidance to plan its work. The new curriculum is not yet fully embedded in classroom practice here. There is no curriculum overview. Appropriate schemes of work are in place for English, mathematics, science and social studies for all year groups. Schemes for other subjects are still being written.

In the girls' and boys' upper school, subjects of the curriculum include English, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education and information and communication technology. French is taught to those pupils who are competent users of the English language. Those who are at earlier stages of language acquisition receive additional support in English instead. Pupils currently take public examinations in the GCSE and, in the sixth form, GCE at Advanced Level.

King Fahad Academy offers a comprehensive curriculum for Islamic Studies and Arabic Language, which also incorporates citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE); this part of the curriculum is offered in accordance with the guidelines of the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Islamic Studies incorporate Qur'anic studies which includes *tahfeez* (memorisation of the holy Qur'an), *tajweed* (the recitation) and *tafseer* (translation and Interpretation). *Hadith* (the actual account of action, speech and statement of the prophet), *seerah* (the life of the prophet), *aqeedah* (beliefs) and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) are part of the subject. Islamic Studies are also offered at GCSE and GCE Advanced level. Planning for these subjects is comprehensive and teachers' files follow the schemes for each subject.

Arabic, including language studies, grammar and literature, is also offered as an additional language.

The school provides full-time supervised education for its pupils of compulsory school age and gives pupils experiences in all the required areas of learning.

Appropriate emphasis is given to pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The development of their independence through investigation and experimentation is given less prominence in the lower schools.

The PSHE course introduces the pupils to a range of appropriate topics to help them increase their self-knowledge and develop an understanding of healthy eating and living. Aspects of this area of the curriculum are interwoven through the written

schemes of work for other subjects such as science, social studies and Islamic Studies.

The citizenship programme has many strong features. It is designed to raise pupils' awareness of issues relating to themselves and others; these include the cultural and linguistic diversity of society, poverty and British institutions.

Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is unsatisfactory at present. The school recognises the need to address this issue and has already put into action a scheme to tackle the issue. Assessment and record keeping procedures are being developed; these are not yet embedded in practice, so that pupils can join a class before the teacher is informed of their language needs and how they can be met. As a result, some pupils do not start learning as quickly as they should. Currently, such pupils do not have a language and learning development plan and their progress is insufficiently carefully tracked.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is at an early stage of development. The school's policy has due regard to the national Code of Practice. Diagnostic assessment procedures are in place and a carefully crafted support system is being introduced. As yet, no pupil has been identified as having learning difficulties requiring an individual educational plan.

Homework enhances curriculum provision, and in most cases forms an integral part of the teaching and learning programme and its purposes are well understood by pupils. In the lower school the homework mainly consists of the three core subjects.

There are different approaches to the provision of careers advice and guidance in the girls' and boys' departments. Year 11 girls, last year had a week's work experience in such fields as law, dentistry and care homes. Work experience has yet to be introduced for boys. However, the boys' department have made links with the Connexions Service, which is providing appropriate support for pupils. Both schools have visits from people working in a variety of professions to give pupils an insight into the world of work.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Teaching and learning in the school is good and improves with the age of the pupils.

Teaching and learning in the nursery is satisfactory. The school is aware of these shortcomings in the nursery and is in the process of putting in place a clear plan of action to improve the situation. Classrooms present colourful and attractive learning environments which are well organised with good displays of children's work. However, the work completed is very adult-directed and lacks individual spontaneity, although some teachers use questioning skills well to stimulate thinking. Good demonstration of work, praise and encouragement help children to achieve well. Though teachers explain work well, they do not use sufficient visual materials, which is very necessary for the majority of children who are learning English as an additional language. In most lessons, the pace of teaching is rather slow. When these very young children are required to sit for long sessions, they lose concentration.

Currently, the assessment system in the nursery is not effective enough to use for planning. Staff plan the same activities for children of all abilities and this results in more able children not receiving an appropriately challenging curriculum. Pupils who are in the early stages of learning English sometimes find tasks beyond their understanding.

The quality of teaching in the lower school is satisfactory and on occasions it is good or very good. There is a common format for lesson planning. However, the detail in planning varies considerably from teacher to teacher, especially in the degree of differentiation of tasks for pupils with different levels of ability.

In the few less successful lessons, the most significant weaknesses are in classroom organisation and pupil management. In these lessons pupils are often allowed to call out answers to questions instead of waiting their turn. As a result, a noisy and restless atmosphere is created, which disrupts learning and hinders pupils' progress.

The quality of teaching in both the girls' and boys' secondary schools is good. Lessons are all well planned in line with the schemes of work. The lessons have a clear sense of purpose and a sharp focus on what pupils should learn. The quality of the teaching is enhanced by the effective use of time and the setting of a good pace. On occasions, the quality of lessons is reduced by the poor punctuality of pupils.

In Islamic studies, teaching is mostly good and staff are well qualified. Annual examinations are conducted under the supervision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Education.

In all lessons essential vocabulary is written on the whiteboard in advance as a way of helping pupils. There is explicit teaching of key vocabulary, which pupils are encouraged to read, read and write and use when answering questions. Good emphasis is placed on the acquisition of subject-specific language in English mathematics and science, for example. Such practice supports pupils with English as an additional language.

However, the teaching of pupils who learn English as an additional language has some shortcomings. There is little evidence in the lesson introductions of activities specifically designed to develop EAL pupils' speaking and listening skills. In most classes pupils are offered whole class activities followed by work sheets setting the same tasks as other pupils. Teachers do not always ensure that their teaching methods are suited to the needs of bi-lingual learners: for example, emphasising and explaining key vocabulary and providing more visual cues for pupils.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *complete a curriculum policy set out in writing and supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work and implement it effectively (paragraph 1(2));*
- *ensure that the curriculum provides the opportunity for all pupils to learn and make progress (paragraph 1(2)(i));*
- *ensure that teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 1(3)(d); and*
- *put in place a framework to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and ensure that information from such assessment is used to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g)).*

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

Pupils develop their self-knowledge, self-confidence and self-esteem through the school's extensive Islamic curriculum, citizenship and PSHE programs. Educational supervisors provided by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Education are delegated to look after the welfare and wellbeing of all the pupils. The school benefits from a mosque on the site and a full-time senior *imam* who offers additional pastoral care. The school provides very well for its pupils' spiritual development.

Relationships between pupils and teachers are, mostly very good and based on mutual respect. The working atmosphere is friendly, relaxed and purposeful and pupils are well behaved.

Marriage, family, gender and youth issues are discussed in (*fiqh*) theology. Cleanliness, personal hygiene, drug awareness, family life, racial discrimination, women's rights, and respect for the law are discussed in assemblies, *fiqh*, *hadith* and *tafseer* lessons. Relationships with other faiths and respect for other individuals are also covered in Islamic studies lessons. The school has started to offer citizenship as a discrete subject.

The school provides pupils with a good general knowledge about British institutions. For example, a visit is planned to meet members of Parliament at the House of Commons.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school takes its responsibilities regarding the welfare, health and safety of its pupils very seriously. A health and safety manager is responsible for the co-ordination of this aspect of the school's organisation. A safety committee has been

convened. Representatives from the senior management team monitor and review the school's practice.

Clear procedures are in place to identify and control health and safety risks both in the school and on educational visits. Pupils are appropriately supervised at all times to ensure their safety. Fire drills are carried out each term and are accurately documented. The fire alarm system is appropriate for its purpose but is to be replaced soon with a more modern version. A fire risk assessment has not been carried out and, although the premises and accommodation are checked each day, a detailed risk assessment record is not maintained. Neither does the school keep an up-to-date equipment register to guarantee that all electrical items are subject to inspection. A commercial company is employed to check the items and is in the process of conducting an audit.

A good range of comprehensive policies provides teachers with practical guidance and support. The behaviour policy is clear and specifies the action to be taken to ensure a consistent approach. A system of rewards and sanctions is in place. Expectations are realistic and measures to promote good discipline are firm and consistent. Strong emphasis is placed on positive behaviour. Clear procedures guard against bullying and the school deals swiftly with incidents on the occasions they occur. The school has no record of sanctions imposed for serious disciplinary offences.

The school has an appropriate child protection policy. Staff are to receive training appropriate for their school responsibilities before the end of term.

There are good arrangements made for pupils who are sick. The school has a clear First Aid policy based on national guidance. A qualified nurse is on site throughout the school day and the handling of medicines and the recording of accidents are carried out effectively. Appropriate procedures are in place for contacting parents if their child falls sick.

Attendance registers and the admission register are kept according to regulations.

The school has not drawn up a suitable three year plan of action to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *implement its written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DfES guidance in particular by providing training for all those concerned with child protection (paragraph 3(2)(b));*

- *have regard to the DfES guidance "Health and Safety: Responsibilities and Powers" (paragraph 3(4));*
- *ensure a satisfactory level of fire safety (paragraph 3(5)); and*
- *keep written records of sanctions imposed on pupils for serious disciplinary offences (paragraph 3(8)).*

What does the school need to do to comply with the DDA?

In order to fulfil its duties under the DDA the school should:

- *devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

All except two of the teaching staff and other adults in contact with pupils have been subject to satisfactory clearance by the Criminal Records Bureau at appropriate levels, and to checks against List 99. The school checks with the agencies that its supply teachers have received the necessary clearance. Not all members of staff have records of checks on medical fitness or written references.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *prior to the confirmation of their appointment, ensure that all staff at the school have been subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau to confirm their suitability to work with children (paragraph 4(b)); and*
- *ensure that prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, appropriate checks are carried out to confirm their medical fitness, and character references and professional references, so that such information will be taken into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4 (c)).*

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The Academy is accommodated in a large purpose-built complex completed in the 1980s. It provides both outdoor and indoor recreational facilities. A beautiful mosque is part of the complex. The site has an environmentally friendly atmosphere, with greenery, flowers, shrubs and trees and playgrounds for each section, and a five-a-side all-weather football pitch. Pupils also can have access to nearby playing fields when needed.

Classrooms and offices are well decorated, clean, properly heated and well lighted. Very few had clocks that were working and accurate, which was a hindrance to punctuality in some lessons. The toilet facilities in the school are appropriate and well-kept.

Girls, boys and early years' sections are separate from each other. There are appropriate numbers of well-equipped science laboratories and information technology rooms in each section, well equipped with resources. There are dining halls and assembly halls for each section and a gymnasium. A medical room is equipped with suitable facilities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

Over recent months the school has taken positive steps to improve its communication with parents. However, some parents who responded to the questionnaire sent out before the inspection expressed concerns about the communication channels between home and school. The aims and ethos of the school are clear and communicated well to pupils, parents and prospective parents. The prospectus provides a satisfactory amount of detail about the school. There are regular newsletters, which contain useful information about administrative and other aspects of school life. A useful website has been designed for parents who wish to access information electronically. The new prospectus contains full particulars of the policy and arrangements for discipline, and details of the pupils' academic performance. However, it does not yet include details of the number of complaints registered under the complaints procedure during the preceding school year.

Detailed written reports of pupils' progress, and achievement in their subjects, are sent out three times a year; briefer interim reports are produced each half term. Parents are invited to the school to discuss the reports.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *make available, and make it clear that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils may request, details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)).*

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints procedure is set out in the prospectus for the benefit of pupils, parents and others. In the parental questionnaire completed prior to the inspection, nearly half of the parents said that they did not understand the school's system for handling complaints. The school has a system ready to record any complaints, but has not recorded any formal complaints in the last year. Copies of the complaints procedure are available for prospective parents, and are referred to on the school's application forms and posted on the school's web site.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	The King Fahad Academy
DfES Number:	307/6068
Type of school:	Primary and Secondary with Nursery
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	3 – 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Girls and Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 276 Girls: 333 Total: 609
Annual fees (day pupils):	£1,000 - £1,500
Address of school:	Bromyard Avenue London W3 7HD
Telephone number:	0208 743 0131
Fax number:	0208 749 7085
Email address:	academy@thekfa.org.uk
Headteacher:	Dr Khaled Aldhahri (Dean)
Proprietor:	The Government of Saudi Arabia
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Neville Grenyer
Date of inspection:	13 – 16 March 2006

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