



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection report

**Modern English School
Cairo**

Egypt

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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, 70 full or part lessons were observed by inspectors. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Students' workbooks were scrutinised, and discussions were held with the senior staff, the management team, a range of teachers, representatives of the governors and groups of students. Two and a half school days were monitored.

The Lead Inspector was John Cranfield. The team members were Rebecca Baggaley, Glenn Doublesin, Glyn Kilsby and Denise Patterson.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

Modern English School, Cairo (MES Cairo) meets all the standards for British Schools Overseas.

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

MES Cairo sets high expectations of all its students and they respond by making good or better progress in their lessons. Levels of attainment are high in both academic and the wider creative capacities, that enable students to be highly effective learners.

The leadership of the incumbent principal and the headteachers has a highly positive impact on all areas of the school ensuring that all staff have a clear understanding of its present and future priorities, and ensures these are monitored and developed. The senior leadership team has clear imperative and capacity to continue to move the school forward. The stated vision is shared and understood by all stakeholders and drives the development of the school.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths. They include:

- 1) The highly effective and pro-active involvement of the board of governors in the strategic direction of the school.
- 2) The senior leadership team who are highly effective in providing clear direction and moving the school forward. They are well supported by middle leaders.
- 3) High teaching standards across the school. Most lessons were good or better. No lesson was judged to be unsatisfactory.
- 4) The quality of curriculum planning and implementation enabling all students to achieve well, exceeding English National and International Baccalaureate averages.
- 5) The school is highly effective in enabling all students to develop their personal skills and qualities. Students are thoughtful, well behaved, treat others with respect and have well developed social skills.
- 6) Safeguarding of all students is a priority. It is under-pinned by excellent pastoral care and robust welfare, health and safety policy and procedures.
- 7) The whole school community, teaching, non-teaching, administration and ancillary staff work as a team to promote high quality learning and care for all students.
- 8) The school is held in high regard by the wider community and parents. Students are proud to be members of the school and value the opportunities it provides.

3.2 Points for improvement

Among the school's many strengths, the following are areas for possible development:

- Monitor the impact of the developing whole school Management Information System in raising student attainment and demonstrating value added.
- Raise the level of teaching across the school to that of the best.
- Continue to review classroom based assessment for learning strategies in order to improve the rigor of teacher feedback, further promote ownership in learning and increase the level of challenge.

4. The context of the school

MES Cairo is an independent school offering international curricula taught by an international, predominantly British staff. The majority of students are Egyptian nationals, joining the school at Foundation Stage and continuing through to graduation in Year 12. There are presently 1,291 students in the primary school. Over 20 nationalities are represented amongst the student population in the Secondary British and IB Diploma sections.

The secondary school (all sections) currently has 888 students on roll: 455 students in the British Section (Years 7-12), 32 students in the IB Diploma Programme (DP11-12) and 401 students in the American Section (G7-12).

The primary school curriculum is closely reflective of the National Curriculum of England from Foundation Stage to Year 6. In Year 6 parents choose between a British or American secondary education for their children. Years 7 and 8 offer a condensed Key Stage 3 curriculum; whilst Grade 7 and 8 offers a Middle School Programme in preparation for a four year American High School Programme, Grades 9 – 12. Students opting for the British curriculum begin their two year IGCSE course at the start of Year 9. Egyptian Ministry of Education regulations require students to take Extended tier papers where these are available.

In Year 11 and 12 students follow AS / A level courses. In addition, students from each section have the opportunity to transfer to the IB Diploma course.

The school acknowledges that offering 3 curriculum choices makes for a complex learning environment and has an impact on administration and staffing, as many teachers teach in more than one section. Through careful planning the school aims to exploit the advantages of being a multi curricular school and minimise organisational restraints.

The school is required to satisfy Ministry expectations with regards to the delivery of Arabic language, religion and social studies at all levels of studies. All students identified as 'Arab' (the majority) must complete national examinations in these subjects in Year 6 and Years 9 and 12.

The school is accredited by BSME, MSA, AdvancEd and the IBO. The school holds ICT Mark recognition and is presently preparing for its 5-year self-evaluation of the IB Diploma programme.

The school has identified accommodating stringent local ministry requirements and continuing to attract high quality staff as major challenges.

4.1 British nature of the school

The appearance, nature and ethos of the school are recognisably British. All teachers either have subject and teaching credentials from UK universities or recognised in the UK.

The school is organized according to the pastoral structures used in English schools. As well as fully implementing the curriculum for England, assessments are based on national standards from the UK. British practice is evident in approaches to performance management, staff target setting and annual review meetings. The school offers PGCEi support to approved individuals and NQT endorsement.

All communications from the school to families and students are provided in English only, as are all school publications, reports, letters and the website. The importance of extra-curricular provision including clubs and school trips, are in line with British best practice. The school celebrates special events in the UK, for example Remembrance Day.

Texts, materials, educational equipment and software are UK sourced. An increasing number of MES Cairo graduates are studying at British universities including Oxford, London and Manchester. MES Cairo is a long-standing and active member of the British Schools in the Middle East (BSME). The incumbent principal and headteacher of the British secondary section is the country representative for Egypt. All subject leaders in the British Secondary section have completed BSO Level 1 inspector training. The school utilises UK experts to deliver quality training.

Parents are supportive of the British nature of the curriculum. Interviews with parents suggested that they appreciate the inclusiveness and high quality of education delivered at MES Cairo.

5. Standard 1

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided by Modern English School (Cairo) is outstanding.

5.1 Curriculum

There is full-time supervised education for all students of compulsory school age. The National Curriculum of England 2014 provides the framework for teaching and learning. The curriculum is broad, balanced and supported by comprehensive policies, age related schemes of work and appropriate resources. The curriculum provides rich opportunities for high quality learning. The school provides personal, social and health education which reflects its aims and ethos. The curriculum fully prepares students for UK examinations and early entry to public examinations is fully justified by outcomes. Students are able to enter or re-enter the UK educational system should they wish to do so without disadvantage.

The curriculum provides students with linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative experiences. The principle language of instruction is English. As students progress through the school, they develop their proficiency in speaking, listening, and numeracy. The school ensures that national requirements are met in the teaching of Arabic, Religion and Social Studies.

In the Early Years, curriculum provision is based on the UK Early Years Foundation Stage. EYFS utilises a pod for free flow access to learning activities and Yard 1 for timetabled outdoor learning. 'Talk for Writing' has also been introduced in the Foundation Stage. All classes are mixed ability. Differentiation is evident in curriculum planning, including extension and challenge activities.

The Primary curriculum is based on the English National Curriculum 2014, adapted to meet local requirements. The school has chosen to retain previous assessment methods. New assessment methods are presently being researched and trialled at various points across the school. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Individual Behaviour Plans (IBPs) are in place to support students with additional needs. There is a planned PSHE programme which reflects the school's aims and ethos. The school has implemented a whole school graduate profile which recognises the skills needed for adult life. At primary level this is accomplished using the '5Rs' approach to learning behaviours and integrating Guy Claxton's model of 'Building Learning Power'. New initiatives such as 'Talk for Writing' have been implemented to enhance levels in writing, in response to a specific need identified from end of Key Stages 1 and 2 data. Gifted and Talented provision in Primary is discreet. Beyond class based provision and setting for mathematics in Years 4 to 6, identified students are invited to specific ECAs that enhance the learning of the highest achievers, including the Bright Sparks club. NVR tests are used to identify specific needs. Dialogue with Secondary is ongoing regarding the development of all-through provision, with some departments supporting specific student needs within the primary school.

The school has implemented a condensed two-year Key Stage 3. All students follow core and foundation subjects. The only elective option is the choice between French or Spanish. Additional English Language support is timetabled for identified students. In 2014, the school implemented a Thematic Approach to Teaching and Learning (ToTAL), whereby subject specialists link their planning and lesson delivery to a common theme. In addition, the increased flexibility provides opportunities for students to develop ICT skills and contributes to their 'Graduate Profile'.

Students commence Key Stage 4 at the start of Year 9. With the exception of English and mathematics, students can choose from 21 IGCSE / GCSE subjects. The final curriculum is a best fit response to student choice. In addition, students follow courses in PE, Arabic, Religion, social studies and PSHE.

MES Cairo offers 19 subjects at AS/ A Level. All students follow courses in PE, Arabic, Religion, social studies and PSHE.

The learning development department (LDD) supports students with learning needs and oversees provision for Gifted and Talented students. Students receive well-judged advice and assistance to make important choices for their future. Opportunities for career exploration and counselling begin in Year 8. The well planned 4-year programme culminates in university application.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities enhances the learning experiences of students. For example: International Award, Model United Nations, student mentor scheme and out-reach community service projects. Students are well prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

Overall teaching and assessment are good with outstanding features.

Teaching in most areas of study is at least good and frequently outstanding. As a result, most students and groups of students, including those with special educational needs are making good or better progress over time. Teachers encourage students to apply intellectual, physical and creative effort, to show interest in their work, and to think and learn for themselves. There is a commitment to support less able students with additional staff enrolled to complement the teaching. The teaching of English is a particular strength throughout the school and this is reflected in the students' work and conversational aptitude.

Lessons are generally well planned and teaching methods are effective. Suitable activities are used and class time is managed properly. Promotion of opportunities for student-initiated learning throughout the Foundation Stage, is developing. Teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, cultural background, needs (including the needs of EAL learners) and prior attainments of the students. They mainly ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons. In some cases, however, planned differentiation was not always implemented. Teachers encourage students to apply intellectual, physical and creative effort to their learning. In the outstanding lessons, a high level of challenge accelerated knowledge acquisition and understanding. The use of a 'Macbeth Rap' in a Year 9 lesson was both stimulating and resourceful. Nearly all students are highly engaged in their learning and make good progress. Teachers have an excellent command of the subject matter being taught. Most teachers ensure that learning time is maximized. Classroom resources are of a high quality, sufficient in quantity and used effectively.

The school has a framework in place to assess student performance regularly and thoroughly. On-going formative assessment is used to assess students' levels of understanding through a mixture of questioning, observations, peer and self-assessment, marking and feedback. In primary school students' writing is assessed five times a year with reading three times a year. Students in Years 1 – 4 are regularly assessed for phonics understanding. The application of 'Assessment for Learning' strategies is not consistent, especially in Key Stage 1.

At the end of Key Stage 2 all students complete a SPaG assessment. Across the school, continuous assessment is supported by three termly reports. Students in Years 6, 8 and 10 undertake CAT tests. Data from testing is compared to averages derived from externally accredited assessments. The information from these assessments is effectively used to plan teaching, so that students can make maximum progress. Heads of department in Secondary are currently receiving training on how to make more effective use of the extensive data available on each student. The whole school implementation of the 'Oracle' data base will enable the school to track individual student progress from the start of primary to the end of Secondary School. There is a policy in place to guide the assessment of students' work in class regularly and thoroughly. The quality and functionality of marking

is inconsistent in Secondary. Most teachers provide a classroom environment that stimulates student engagement and interest. Nearly all students behave in a way conducive to their learning.

The styles of teaching, learning and assessment equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to enter or re-enter the UK educational system at an appropriate level.

5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

Overall the standards achieved by students are high.

At the end of the Foundation Stage, the percentage of students achieving a good level of development (GLD) is broadly comparable to UK national averages. The average points score compares favourably to UK national averages, 35% compared to 33.8%. A significant percentage of students exceed the higher UK ELG national standards in understanding, speaking, reading, writing and number. The school has identified shape and space and extended writing as areas for development. Students in the primary years continue to make good progress. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1, level 2b, is above UK national expectations for reading and mathematics. Level 3 attainment in writing is below UK standards, 6% compared to 16%. Attainment in mathematics at level 3 is high, 54% compared to 24%.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 compares favourably with UK national averages at Level 4 for all core subjects and for Level 5 in reading and mathematics. Students continue to make good or better progress across the secondary years. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4, Year 10, are high. 46% of MES Cairo students achieving A*- A grades across English, Mathematics and top 3 subjects, compared to 21.2% in the UK. 86.66% of MES Cairo students achieved 5 A*- C grades including English and mathematics compared to 69% in the UK. Attainment at AS and A2 is broadly comparable to the UK. MES Cairo students feature prominently at the annual Cambridge High Achievers Awards. A recent MES Cairo graduate achieved the highest score in the world in Edexcel A-level psychology.

100% of students succeed at IB Diploma level. The most recent average points score of 33 exceeded the global average of 30 (out of a possible 45).

CAT baseline data demonstrates that most students exceed their predicted grades. For example, in mathematics the average value added per student from Year 7 to 10 was 0.6 of a grade.

The school is highly successful in helping students to develop their personal skills and qualities: students are thoughtful and well behaved. Students are highly motivated learners. By the time they leave school, they have the personal and social skills needed to move successfully to the next stage of their lives.

6. Standard 2

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils at MES Cairo is outstanding and a strength of the school.

The foundations of the social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development of the students is embedded within the school motto 'Care, Challenge and Inspire'. Students develop their understanding through a combination of themed assemblies, planned PSHE lessons, tutor time, and the informal curriculum as they move through the school. Students are provided with a broad general knowledge of the responsibilities of citizenship in Egypt, the UK and internationally. During their time at MES Cairo students increasingly develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and gain in confidence.

Teachers plan opportunities for students to work in pairs or small groups in order to reinforce the necessary social skills that underpin effective pair and small group work. Students' views are highly valued. The Student Council is both active and strong in the school from Year 3 to Year 13. The electoral system is clear to students and works efficiently. Regular meetings are held with class representatives, student councillors and pastoral heads to give them their voice. Primary students who show maturity and a sense of self-awareness are rewarded with a 'star' badge which affords them certain privileges. Initiatives, such as *Manners Matter*, Golden rules, playground friendship bench, and the Graduate profile, support students' social development.

Moral development is excellent: the school effectively enables and encourages students to distinguish right from wrong, and to show respect for the law. They show a respect for others' needs, interests and feelings as well as their own. Students understand the consequences of their actions. They are acutely aware of the school's rewards and sanctions.

Students show a sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them, including the intangible. Aspects of spirituality are embedded in the MES Cairo Graduate Profile.

Cultural development is excellent. Students show an awareness, appreciation and respect for each other, the wider world and other cultures. This was particularly evident in lessons, on the playground, in the Homeroom Community Forum and through assemblies. Students are articulate and culturally aware, appropriate to their age and location, demonstrating a strong commitment to the local community by supporting local charities and an orphanage. They have a well-developed understanding of local and international issues.

Rich curriculum experiences ensure that students acquire a good knowledge and understanding of modern British life including UK attitudes towards tolerance, democracy, respect for freedom of expression and other human rights.

7. Standard 3

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students throughout the school is outstanding. MES Cairo has placed a high priority on ensuring that the well-being, security and safety of all students are driving considerations when establishing school policies and practices.

Health and safety procedures and systems go beyond Egyptian regulatory requirements and are in line with standards and practices of schools in the UK. Fire, earthquake and site safety (safe & sound policy) drills are held regularly. The premises are designed with safety in mind with safe zones and multiple spacious exits. Fire-fighting equipment is present and conspicuous, however not all extinguishers had inspection checks recorded on their labels. Several security personnel are also trained as fire fighters in case of emergency.

The school has prepared and implemented an effective written policy to prevent bullying. The document outlines what bullying is and identifies possible symptoms, with recourse procedures and sanctions. Parents identify the safe and secure environment of the school as a strength with particular mention of the transport infrastructure and the quality of the premises. The organisation of bus movement is careful and thorough. Safety is an explicit priority and safety checks and maintenance is a continuous process. Students are tracked on and off the buses and on-board cameras and GPS systems give added monitoring and security to their transfer. This on-board monitoring has had a positive impact on student behaviour on the buses. On-board supervisors are also present for each. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure safety on school trips within the country and abroad.

The school has implemented a highly effective first aid policy. The school has three paediatric doctors and one nurse present on school campus at all times. Storage and handling of medication is appropriate. Health records are well organised on the school data management system. Communication between medical staff and teaching staff is effective and confidentiality is assured. Emergency contact details are held by the doctor and administration. The majority of students buy refreshments from the school canteens where food is provided by contracted caterers. The school closely monitors menus and food quality. There are regular health and hygiene checks. Laboratories are safe and appropriate to minimise risk and danger. The science prep room was fit for purpose. Dangerous chemicals are stored in a separate well-ventilated safe storage room. Science teachers were observed to insist on safe practices and behaviours.

School staff are on a rota, taking turns to be on duty before/after school and at break-times, to ensure proper supervision. The school employs 76 security personnel in and around the schools. Their presence is conspicuous throughout the school at all times and they have a specific role to play in maintaining order. Disciplinary instances are recorded and stored in the school's management information system. The school maintains an admissions and attendance register which exceeds local regulatory requirements. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure attendance remains high and tardiness low. PASS testing has been introduced recently. Data is used to identify lack of confidence, esteem and attitude towards teachers. Where appropriate, students are put on the safeguarding register.

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

The suitability of the proprietor and staff is of a high order. The academic board oversee school policies, ensuring all local requirements are met. They do not interfere with the management of the school; there are clear lines of demarcation.

The board ensures the school meets the safety, care and guidance requirements for all students. In addition, they take responsibility for the recruitment and checking of staff credentials.

Prior to the confirmation of staff appointments, appropriate checks, including police checks in the country of origin, are carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, right to work in Egypt and their previous employment activity. The Department of Education must approve the qualifications and status of teachers employed by the school before issuing work visas. This process requires the checking of original certification including the attestation of degree certificates and teaching qualifications held by teachers. Locally hired, non-teaching staff are vetted by national security services at the point of employment. Random checks are carried out annually. All transportation personnel undergo annual toxicology tests.

There is a list maintained of all staff and volunteers who currently work in the school. This shows when they started and stopped working in the school.

Staffing levels are more than adequate for the successful delivery of the curriculum. All teaching staff have qualifications appropriate to their role; some staff have further academic or teaching qualifications that enhance school development.

9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are outstanding. The school makes excellent use of its space and the campus safely accommodates 2,200 students; its maximum capacity. The campus consists of four main buildings with the two large classroom blocks built around attractive courtyards. Playground areas are colourful and have well maintained equipment and safe play surfaces. There are impressive sports facilities including sports halls, a full size running track, grass playing fields and a newly covered swimming pool.

Teaching areas are well resourced and classroom furniture is suitable for the needs and ages of the students. Interactive whiteboards and ICT resources are used effectively throughout the school. In secondary, the student use of laptops supports learning and encourages independence. Specialist teaching areas including the libraries, science and PE are well equipped. Movement around the school is well monitored by teachers and support staff and student movement is orderly, calm and safe. The leadership team, teachers and support staff ensure that student safety at the start and end of the school day are excellent.

The facilities and maintenance staff are well trained and committed to a high standard of safety and security. The school is very well maintained and is clean and hygienic. Water, electricity and fire systems all meet required standards and there are clear policies and safety checks for all these systems. There are a high number of trained security staff both outside and inside the buildings who ensure the safety of all members of the school. Security standards are high and in place 24 hours a day.

There is a clear commitment from the board and school leadership to continuously improving the site. Two recent building developments; the covering of the swimming pool with an inflatable dome and the installation of solar panels, show an understanding of environmental concerns, and the recent addition of a lift allows improved access for students with limited mobility.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

Appropriate contact details are provided for parents and other stakeholders, including the e-mail contact details of the school board and the senior leaders. The school's ethos is prominently featured in relevant documents and publications and referenced as a key driver of school improvement. The school's website is informative for potential applicants, who on contacting the school are then well-supported and kept informed at every stage of the admission process. In primary, at the beginning of every year there is a 'Meet and Greet' session for teachers to familiarise themselves with the new teachers in the year group pod. Details of educational provision for students with additional learning needs is available on request.

An overview of policies and procedures relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, promotion of good behaviour and sanctions are published in the Secondary Student Planner. Access to comprehensive policy documents is available on request. A summary of the curriculum is posted on the school's website, in addition to a range of information booklets to support student choice as applicable. A summary of external examination results is published in Term 1 of the MESenger magazine in addition to the school's website.

Parents are advised on how to share concerns with staff via the Parent Handbook (Primary), Student Planner (Secondary) and in parent information sessions. Detailed records are kept of complaints and outcomes. A focus group of parents were highly complementary about the process. The school regularly seeks feedback from parents both formally and informally and proactively works to address any issues identified.

Face to face meetings are given a high priority. Teachers in the lower primary provide effective contact points for parents collecting students. In addition, parents are invited to attend transition meetings, music concerts, school productions and sports day. Reporting procedures are detailed and regular, providing information on progress and behaviour. A comprehensive log is kept on all staff employed together with their qualifications and service records. Inspection reports are posted on the school's website.

11. *Standard 7*

The school's procedure for handling complaints

There is a formal complaints procedure that is transparent, open and effective, and takes into account local laws and regulations. The complaints procedures are rigorously adhered to and highly effective in ensuring that a complaint is dealt with at the appropriate level. Written records clearly detail the process regarding individual complaints and a high level of confidentiality is observed. Parental feedback indicates a high degree of satisfaction with both the speed of response and the outcome of any complaint.

12. *Standard 8*

The quality of provision for boarding

Not applicable.

13. Standard 9

Leadership and management of the school

Leadership and management are excellent. The governance role fulfilled by the board is outstanding.

The Senior Management Team is held to account by the board. They are uncompromising in their drive to improve attainment, and maintain the highest levels of achievement for all pupils irrespective of their ability, over a sustained period of time.

The incumbent principal provides outstanding leadership. She is well supported by her senior leadership team. Collectively they have developed a shared vision which provides clear direction, as reflected in the high quality of education, the care of pupils, and the fulfilment of the school's aims and ethos.

Senior leaders have effectively delegated some responsibilities as appropriate to middle managers. This has enabled staff to make a strong contribution to the effective development and progress of the school. There is a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, underpinned by robust performance management procedures.

Effective systems of tracking ensure all staff clearly understand students next stage in learning. MES Cairo has promoted the importance of the development of the whole child. In addition to the monitoring of academic standards, great care is taken to ensure all students have opportunities to develop across the whole range of personal and social skills. The school has a highly positive impact on student behaviour, in addition to their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

The school leadership team values highly the contribution made by all staff in ensuring each and every student succeeds. Both teaching and non-teaching staff are recognized as valued members of the school team. This has created a strong community of professionals who support, encourage and work highly effectively.

The school actively seeks to recruit staff of the highest calibre and ensures all safeguarding procedures are in place.