



## Dear German International Private School Principal - Sharjah Education Zone

Following the recent evaluation visit to your school, I am pleased to enclose a copy of your report. This provides you with an objective evaluation of the strengths of the school, comments on areas for improvement and recommendations for future development. Also noted is our decision in respect of accreditation for your school.

I should be grateful if you would now please

- Check the factual information in the report
- Sign/initial each page

You have 5 working days from the date of this letter to correct any factual inaccuracies. If no communication is received within 5 working days of the date of this letter, your verification of the factual information will be assumed.

Also enclosed is a template to help you prepare your action plan based on the recommendations in the report.

Thank you once again for taking part in the programme.

Yours sincerely

**Report issued in : 20-05-2014**

## Explanation of the judgements used in the report

**Highly effective:** Good outcomes or good professional practice

**Effective:** Acceptable outcomes or competent professional practice.

**Not yet effective:** Outcomes or quality not yet at the effective level. Schools will be expected to act to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

## Information about the school

The German International School is a private school, situated in Sharjah providing education for male and female students in Kindergarten and Grades 1 to 10, aged 4 years to 16 years. At the time of the evaluation, there were 180 students on roll. There were no Emirati students.

The German International School was evaluated in May 2014 as part of the Ministry of Education School Evaluation Programme. Evaluators considered six key focus areas – the leadership of the school, the school as a community, the school's approach to student learning, the classroom climate, students' personal development, and students' attainment and progress.

## Recommendation for Accreditation

The German International School has achieved the standards required and is recommended to the Ministry of Education for accreditation. All six focus areas were evaluated as highly effective.

### **Focus Area 1: The leadership of the school**

#### Aspects of the school's leadership which were positive

##### **❖ Strong leadership**

The Principal and the Assistant Principal were very dynamic and provided strong pedagogic role models for the rest of the teachers, which helped to raise standards of teaching across the school. In addition to their considerable administrative responsibilities, both had large teaching timetables and taught their lessons skilfully ensuring high student progress and attainment. Their management and interpersonal skills were also highly developed which resulted in the school running efficiently in spite of the large turnover of staff and high student mobility.

##### **❖ Strategic direction**

The school's strategic direction was strong and the school shared it with all stakeholders in a unique and engaging way by presenting the mission, vision and priorities in a colour-coded image. This was depicted as a house with combined German and Arabic cultures 'under one roof'. The school's strategic plan was well defined and outlined key areas for development with a detailed action plan. The school implemented the strategies in this plan thoroughly and monitored outcomes systematically. School self-evaluation was beginning to impact school development through analysis of key areas for development. A collegial approach was a key strategy. The school took into account the views of parents, students and teachers, involving them in the decision making processes of the school as members of the steering group. Additionally seven parents were members of the governing body, responsible for all financial monitoring and contacts with the education authorities in Germany who supported the school financially and provided teaching staff.

### ❖ **Good management systems**

The school had a logical management structure which clearly defined responsibilities for administrative staff, middle management staff and teachers. Arrangements for monitoring, professional development and induction were comprehensive and it was a tribute to the quality of the school's professional development and induction that it had accommodated the influx of a large number of new staff this year. They were already making a full contribution to the work of the school after a short time in post. The timetabling ran smoothly and resources were deployed efficiently. Accommodation was well resourced and deployed. The attractive site was secure and well maintained. Staff supervised students well when required and applied all necessary safety routines.

### Aspects of the school's leadership that should be improved

#### ❖ **The impact of feedback to teachers after lesson observations**

The school followed an official German framework for feeding back after lessons. This did not permit school leaders to make direct comments to teachers about their choice of teaching methods, because of the German principle of academic freedom, especially among teachers qualified to teach at secondary level. However, the school had identified the need to ensure that all teachers differentiated their teaching.

Overall judgement of Focus Area 1: **The leadership of the school was highly effective**

### Recommendations for improvement

#### ❖ **Improve the implementation of the school priority on differentiation by:**

- Getting all teachers to confirm their agreement with the priority of differentiation
- Formalising the current peer coaching approach to focus on differentiation and discuss this following these visits
- Negotiating through various steering groups the culture of school leaders giving feedback after lesson observations

## **Focus Area 2: The school as a community**

### Aspects of the school as a community which were positive

#### ❖ **Positive relationships**

The school was warm and caring, supporting the vision of 'a family under one roof'. Students and teachers were welcoming and the school provided a supportive learning environment. Students' views were valued, with mutual trust evident. New staff felt valued and readily assumed responsibilities. Leaders encouraged free exchange of views resulting in high morale.

#### ❖ **Student support**

Adults supported students well. Students elected teachers as a point of contact to resolve problems. The nurse checked health and trained students in first aid. The school trained others in conflict management.

#### ❖ **Communication**

Regular and varied communication through reports, emails, SMS and letters ensured that parents felt engaged and welcomed. Through meetings and other means parents gave opinions and influenced changes in policies and practices.

### ❖ **Parents and local community involvement in the life of the school**

Parents were involved in the school and purchased trees for the grounds and helped in celebrations such as national days and Eid. Local German companies sponsored the school through finance, products or vocational placements. The German Consulate and network of UAE German schools supported the curriculum and professional development. The school shared facilities with a neighbouring French school and exchanged visits to a Sharjah School to share experiences and culture.

### Aspects of the school as a community that should be improved

#### ❖ **Information for parents how to support students at home**

Although the school had regular links and communication with parents and presented some information on websites, information of how to support students' learning was not extensive.

Overall judgement of Focus Area 2: **The school as a community was Highly effective**

### Recommendations for improvement

#### ❖ **Increase the amount of information to help parents support student learning by:**

- Providing guidance leaflets for various subjects
- Organising workshops for parents to explain aspects of the curriculum so that they have the knowledge to help
- Increasing the amount of such information on the school website or through hyperlinks

## **Focus Area 3: The school's approach to student learning**

### Aspects of the school's approach to student learning which were positive

#### ❖ **The quality of the curriculum**

The school successfully implemented the Thuringian state curriculum and ensured consistently high quality planning of tasks and assessment, which had a significant impact on meeting students' needs. The chosen curriculum took full account of the range of students' needs by allocating students to one of three ability streams. This ensured differentiated learning opportunities in many subjects and offered differentiated assessment to students in Grades 6 to 10. Arabic as a mother tongue and second language and Islamic Education complied with the MoE.

#### ❖ **The quality of the teaching staff**

The majority of teachers were well-qualified teachers from Germany who knew the curriculum well so planned and delivered the curriculum with the appropriate methodology. Two trainee teachers from Germany offered support and new ideas. The teachers received good professional development and also engaged in peer mentoring to hone specific curriculum and planning knowledge and teaching skills. The school used its close links with a network of local German schools to promote both professional development and curriculum development.

#### ❖ **Broad curriculum**

The curriculum was broad offering creative and physical opportunities in addition to the academic subjects. The curriculum planning was related to the real world and offered opportunities for cross-curricular connections, which motivated students to learn independently. The school was currently preparing to offer the International Baccalaureate in Grade 10. There were additional opportunities for extension work and remedial support in the core subjects. Extra lessons supported students whose

mother tongue was not German. After school programmes provided support for homework and additional activities including music cookery and sport.

### Aspects of the school's approach to student learning that should be improved

#### ❖ **Arabic language**

Planning for Arabic as an additional language did not focus sufficiently on the development of communicative listening and speaking skills, which slowed students' achievement.

### Overall judgement of Focus Area 3: **The school's approach to student learning was highly effective**

### Recommendations for improvement

#### ❖ **Improve the planning for learning Arabic as a foreign language by:**

- Redesigning the school's Arabic curriculum to include a greater focus on listening and speaking in communicative contexts, especially for beginners

## **Focus Area 4: The classroom climate**

### Aspects of the classroom climate which were positive

#### ❖ **Students' engagement in learning**

Students enjoyed lessons and were keen and excited by learning. They responded enthusiastically and made lively contributions. Students worked cooperatively because teachers' regularly included group work, which developed students' confidence and encouraged debate. There were good opportunities for students to lead group activities and support each other. Kindergarten children developed practical skills by building towers, searching for insects or carefully cutting seaweed fronds from card for a model aquarium.

#### ❖ **Students' ability to work independently and apply learning**

Teachers involved students in their learning through interactive approaches, which motivated students. Teachers made learning clear, provided appropriate resources and organised opportunities for students to think and work independently, which contributed to significant progress. Students routinely applied learning and knowledge to problem solving and research activities. Grade 5 students applied English phases in role-play in a shop, while Grades 3 to 6 solved challenging mathematics problems. Kindergarten children chose varied activities, learning through investigation. Students used Ipads and laptops confidently to support work.

#### ❖ **Questioning to secure understanding**

Challenging questioning checked students' progress during lessons and probed understanding and reasoning. Good feedback informed students about how well they were progressing. During lessons, teachers checked progress and picked up misconceptions, explaining again so that students were successful. Students listened carefully and responded at length to questions. Students asked challenging questions of each other as part of the daily formal written assessment of individuals. In Grade 8 Geography delivered in English, students assessed each other's presentations applying agreed criteria.

#### ❖ **Assessment and teachers knowledge of individuals**

Assessment at the beginning of all lessons quickly involved all students. Individuals who answered on the board decided if they wanted this recorded as part of their individual on-going assessment profile.

This routine practice secured teachers good knowledge of all students when answers were checked. Assessment informed support during the lessons, groupings or tasks and worksheets. Introductions related to previous learning and teachers reviewed learning at the end. This approach enabled students to be clear about the direction of their learning. Teachers managed pace in lessons to secure time for short written assessment tasks. Students benefited from independent working time, which allowed time for individual discussions and feedback with the teacher.

#### ❖ **Quality of classroom management**

All teachers established a calm and purposeful learning atmosphere. Behaviour in all lessons was excellent which enabled teachers to encourage lively and active participation. Students knew their contributions were valued which had a positive impact on their own and others' learning. Teachers and students showed high levels of respect for one another, so learning was never disrupted. Students listened well in lessons because they wanted to make progress. Students became confident learners.

#### Aspects of the classroom climate that should be improved

#### ❖ **Differentiation in lessons**

Teachers had begun to include various ways to incorporate different work for different abilities in lessons. However, despite a clear system of 'setting' within classes from Grade 5 into Gymnasium, Realschule and Hauptschule, differentiation was not a strong in all lessons. Sometimes the tasks were the same for all.

### Overall judgement of Focus Area 4: **The classroom climate was highly effective**

#### Recommendations for improvement

#### ❖ **Improve the differentiation in lessons by:**

- Continuing professional development for teachers to develop their knowledge and skills of more precise differentiation so that they always apply this in all lessons
- Sharing the best examples in school through peer observations and peer coaching support for planning

## **Focus Area 5: Students' personal development**

#### Aspects of students' personal development which were positive

#### ❖ **Self discipline**

Students displayed high levels of self-discipline in all lessons, working quietly and confidently individually and in small groups. During breaks they organised games with friends, read quietly or engaged in friendly discussions. Older students supported younger ones at play. This took place with large numbers of students together with minimal staff supervision. As soon as the bell rang, students immediately proceeded to lessons without the need for prompting by the staff on duty. The high attendance rate of 97% and punctuality to lessons showed positive attitudes.

#### ❖ **Students' active contribution to school life**

Students' contributed to school life in numerous ways. Each class elected school representatives. Two students from this group represented whole school's opinions, concerns and issues as full members of the school's management steering group. The school trained some students in conflict management. Students spoke freely to the Principal, who sought their views on topics through anonymous questionnaires.

## ❖ **Understanding of Islamic values and the development of the UAE.**

Students' had a good knowledge and understanding of Islam from lessons and observation of the world around them. They clearly applied these to their everyday life shown by their caring and respectful behaviour to visitors and each other. Praying in school was important for Muslims and the school provided a space for this purpose. Students listened with respect to the national anthem in assembly. Students' had an excellent knowledge of the history and development of the UAE. Older students talked about cultural diversity.

### Aspects of students' personal development that should be improved

#### ❖ **Knowledge of traditions**

Students had good knowledge of cultures but their knowledge of traditions and food was more limited.

### Overall judgement of Focus Area 5: **Students' personal development was highly effective**

### Recommendations for improvement

#### ❖ **Consolidate students knowledge of traditions and food by:**

- Displaying Arabic artefacts around the school preferably labelled in Arabic and German

## **Focus Area 6: Students' attainment and progress**

### Aspects of students' attainment and progress which were positive

#### ❖ **High attainment and improved results in Grade 10**

Results in the German state examinations at Grade 10 had improved steadily over three years with an increased number of students graded as higher level, Gymnasium students each year. Results for all subjects were good, but English was extremely high in 2013. In other grades students attained in line with or above expectations in Grade 6 and 8. Results in German were similar to students in Germany, which represented good achievement, for students not living in a German speaking country and many not being native speakers. In German, Grade 7 students answered challenging questions about novels justifying answers by reference to the text. Grade 10 debated issues from 12<sup>th</sup> century original text urging people to participate in crusades.

#### ❖ **High level of spoken English and French**

The level of spoken English and French was above international standards. Grade 8 students competently delivered a presentation about New York, in English. Students from Grades 1 to 10 chose to conduct interviews with the evaluators in English, giving accurate, in-depth answers and explanations. In Grade 7 English students discussed metaphor in song lyrics. Grade 6 beginners in French understood the whole lesson conducted in French spoken at normal speed by a native speaker. By Grade 10 they discussed the topic of obesity at length and responded confidently to challenging questions from fellow students.

#### ❖ **Progress from starting points**

The mobility of students in and out of the school was high, some only staying for two years. Upon arrival, the school conducted detailed assessments of students' German spoken skills. Based on this information, students were allocated to differentiated groups and supported with German as Foreign language. Students made good progress because of thorough monitoring and individual class assessment. In Grade 3 students knew all sounds and numbers in Arabic and by Grade 9 discussed



text. Many children entered kindergarten with no German language but quickly developed skills and confidence. Arabic skills in kindergarten progressed because they had specific Arabic teaching.

#### ❖ **Readiness for the next stage of Education**

Students' high attainment and good progress meant they were well prepared for the next stages of education. Students understood the need to work hard to achieve good results. The school's individualised monitoring of students' performance and use of data to adapt teaching meant that students had well developed skills appropriate for their age. Independent research, IT and investigation skills were well developed. Kindergarten children's social and exploration skills were excellent, and their fine and gross motor skills well developed. The sound basis in phonics had a positive influence on writing.

#### Aspects of students' attainment and progress that should be improved

##### ❖ **Systems for tracking trends in data**

Teachers had a wealth of individual student information, and leaders had examination information. However systems to collate this information and track trends were not well developed. Since cohorts were small and constantly changing, the school missed the opportunity to show progress of students at different points of entry and analyse the impact of the school's work.

Overall judgement of Focus Area 6: **Students' attainment and progress was highly effective**

#### Recommendations for improvement

##### ❖ **Improve systems for tracking students attainment and progress with changing cohorts by:**

- Devising a systems to closely track students progress from their different entry points into the school
- Monitoring trends of attainment by using the different data sets that show those students who had been part of the cohort for longer and those who had just joined



## Summary of judgements

In their evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school, the evaluation team made judgements about the following aspects of the school's performance.

The leadership of the school	Highly Effective
The school as a community	Highly Effective
The school's approach to student learning	Highly Effective
The classroom climate	Highly Effective
Students' personal development	Highly Effective
Students' attainment and progress	Highly Effective

## The capacity of the school to improve

The evaluation team has considered the capacity of the school leadership to act on the recommendations in the report and to improve over the next 12 month period. The team's confidence in the capacity of the leadership of the school to act on the recommendations in the report and to improve school performance in the relevant areas within the next 12 months is: **HIGH**

**HIGH** confidence means that the evaluation team believes that the current school leadership will take a positive attitude towards the findings of the report and will quickly act on the recommendations. The team would expect to see significant improvements in school performance in the relevant areas well within the next 12 months.

**MODERATE** confidence means that the evaluation team believes that the current school leadership will quickly begin to act on the recommendations in the report but will need additional support to implement them in full. The team would expect to see noticeable improvements in school performance in the relevant areas within the next 12 months. The team recommends that the school receives support to develop and implement its plan for improvement.

**LOW** confidence means that the evaluation team believes that the current school leadership does not have the capacity to act on the recommendations in the report. Under the current leadership the team would not expect to see sufficient improvement in school performance within the next 12 months. The team recommends that the leadership of the school should be reviewed.

### What happens next?

The school should prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the recommendations in the report.

### ACCREDITATION

**The evaluation team has recommended to the Ministry of Education that the school is accredited.**

**The evaluation team has further recommended that the school is awarded distinction as its practice has been judged to be Highly Effective in leadership and at least three other Focus Areas.**

### How to contact us

If you wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact: Hasna Bufteam on [HasnaM.Bufteam@moe.gov.ae](mailto:HasnaM.Bufteam@moe.gov.ae)

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