



**British School
Overseas**
Inspected by Penta International

Inspection report

Arbor School

Dubai

United Arab Emirates

Date
Inspection number

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1. Purpose and scope of the inspection

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

The inspection and this report follow the 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; the school's complaints procedures; and leadership and management. If appropriate, there is a separate section on the quality of boarding provision. 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 DfE on the extent to which schools meet the standards for BSO.

During the inspection visit, 50 lesson observations took place. School documentation and policies were analysed and data reviewed. Pupils' workbooks were seen in lessons, and discussions were held with the staff, parents and informally with students. The inspection took place over three days.

The lead inspector was Karen Hanratty. The team members were Dr. Andre Nel, Kirsty Sharp, Shona Wood and Colin Dyson.

2. Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school has shown that it meets the standards for British Schools Overseas, except for those that cannot be achieved legally in the host country. These pertain to aspects of the UK Equality Act 2010. The relevant standards are:

Part 1 – ‘2(2)(d)(ii)- encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation as set out in the Equality Act 2010;’

and

Part 2 – ‘5(b)(vi)- encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

The school actively promotes tolerance and a respect for all human differences, within the confines of the law. This is embedded in the culture and ethos of the school. This judgement is endorsed by the British government and is valid for three years. The inspection process is quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

3. Overall effectiveness of the school

The school provides an outstanding education, based on a robust, innovative and values-driven curriculum, delivered through high quality, engaging teaching. Safeguarding and student welfare are key priorities, resulting in a safe and nurturing environment. The school premises offer many unique features and are maintained to the highest standards. Leaders at all level demonstrate dedication and expertise.

3.1 What the school does well

There are many strengths at the school, including:

- throughout the school, students' behaviour, confidence, motivation and attitudes to learning, which make them excellent ambassadors for the school;
- drive, energy and commitment of school leaders at all levels, to ensure the needs of all students across the school are met;
- vision of the school's owners and governors to provide a unique, high-quality educational opportunity and provision for students in Dubai;
- drive of all teaching and non-teaching staff to excellence - everyone wants to be the best they can be;
- comprehensive focus on safeguarding and students' welfare, including the youth mental first aiders programme;
- focus on wellbeing across the school, for students, staff and parents;
- use of data to differentiate and personalise learning for all students;
- support provided by the Thrive department to children and adults in the school, appropriate to their diverse needs;
- family feel and sense of community, which encompasses all stakeholders;
- pride taken in the school by the whole school community.

3.2 Points for improvement

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

- i. Continue to streamline modes of communications with parents;
- ii. As the school further grows and develops, maintain the community feel and personalised approach to students' education and welfare;
- iii. Become a beacon of excellence for other schools - leverage expertise and exploit the school's position as a leader in eco-literacy, to drive regional innovation and developments in this area.

4. The context of the school

Full name of school	The Arbor School				
Address	Al Furjan - Dubai				
Telephone number/s	+971 4 581 4100				
Website address	https://thearborschool.ae/				
Key email address	principal@thearborschool.ae				
Headteacher/principal	Ms Gemma Thornley				
Chair of board/proprietor	Mr Kenneth Jones				
Age range	3-18				
Total number of pupils	1392	Boys	721	Girls	671
Numbers by age	0-2 years	0	12-16 years	219	
	3-5 years	342	17-18 years	19	
	6-11 years	812	18+ years	0	
Total number of part-time children		6			

The Arbor School, Dubai, was founded in 2018 with an initial enrolment of 246 students aged 3 - 10. It has rapidly grown into a thriving British international school offering education from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) through to Key Stage (KS) 5. Today, the school serves a diverse student body representing 87 nationalities, with the largest cohorts being from the UK (26.9%), India (9.7%), and Canada (4%).

Firmly rooted in the national curriculum for England, Arbor delivers a rigorous curriculum that ensures clear progression across all phases. A distinctive feature of the curriculum is the integration of eco-literacy, sustainability, and project-based learning. This reflects values that are deeply embedded in the ethos of the school and are apparent in the innovative teaching methods and environments including biodomes and living classrooms.

Students follow the national curriculum for England and are prepared for UK qualifications including GCSEs, A Levels, BTECs, and NCFE awards, allowing for seamless reintegration into UK schooling or access to global university pathways.

The school comprises a highly inclusive community, with 71% of students identified as English as an additional language (EAL) learners, 5% English language learners (ELL), and 9% with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Teaching staff are well qualified, with 78% UK-trained or experienced in British curriculum schools, ensuring that Arbor maintains its British educational character while fostering a global outlook.

4.1 British nature of the school

Arbor School has many distinct British features, which include the following:

- The school delivers the national curriculum for England, including the EYFS programme;
- Lessons are delivered in a style compatible with the best schools in the UK, with a focus on developing students independence, enquiry and problem-solving skills;
- Many of the school's teaching resources are sourced from the UK;
- Assessments systems are British, including GL Progress tests, CAT4, and New Group Reading Test (NGRT), leading to GCSE, A levels, BTEC and NCFE qualifications;
- The school's calendar, timetables, key stage and year group structures closely resemble those in the UK;
- Students wear their school uniform with pride;
- A significant proportion (78%) of Arbor's teaching staff are UK-trained and qualified, holding PGCEs, QTS, and NPQs. The school also supports Early Career Teachers (ECTs);
- Staff participate in UK-based CPD pathways, such as *StepLab* and *National Professional Qualifications* (NPQs);
- Leadership structures reflect best practice in British schools, including robust governance, pastoral systems, and safeguarding protocols;
- British values, such as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance are at the heart of the school;
- Students take part in a range of leadership opportunities, many of which are democratically elected. These include student council, eco-committee, and house captains;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education mirrors the UK's personal, social and health education (PSHE) framework;
- A strong emphasis on preparing students for UK universities, includes university guidance from a futures counsellor and strong links to UK universities;
- Safeguarding practices are closely aligned with UK expectations;
- Arbor is an active member of British Schools in the Middle East (BSME) and The Alliance for Sustainable Schools (TASS).

5. Standard 1

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of education provided is outstanding. The national curriculum for England is blended with a robust focus on ecoliteracy and sustainability, and delivered through engaging, high-quality teaching, resulting in outstanding attainment and progress for students.

5.1 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and meets the standard for BSO.

Arbor's curriculum is a dynamic and holistic model aligned with the National Curriculum for England. It is designed to deliver academic excellence while nurturing personal development, critical thinking, and global awareness across all key stages. The curriculum blends subject mastery with innovative approaches such as ecoliteracy, project-based learning, and interdisciplinary teaching to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to thrive academically and socially.

In the EYFS, Arbor offers a rich, play-based curriculum. Children engage in sensory-rich, inquiry-led activities that develop early literacy and numeracy, alongside personal and social skills. Phonics and mathematics are introduced through hands-on sessions, while the use of eco themes and natural environments foster curiosity and environmental awareness. Learning spaces are carefully curated to support independent exploration and meaningful learning.

At KSs 1 and 2, the curriculum deepens students' understanding through structured teaching and thematic projects. English teaching focuses on developing confident readers, writers, and speakers, with oracy embedded across all subjects. Mathematics is delivered using a mastery approach and enriched with real-world applications. Science teaching encourages inquiry through hands-on investigations and outdoor learning. Lessons are engaging and purposeful, with clear learning outcomes that extend beyond content knowledge to include collaboration, communication, and problem-solving. Subjects such as art, music, physical education (PE), and computing are taught by specialists and interwoven with the school's ecoliteracy and sustainability ethos.

KS3 continues this interdisciplinary, inquiry-driven approach through the *Eco Lens* framework, which integrates curriculum content with real-world challenges. Subject learning is explored via cross-curricular projects that promote active engagement and transferable skills. Students learn through direct teaching, collaborative tasks, and independent research, developing autonomy and critical thinking. Weekly reading lessons and cross-subject literacy and numeracy reinforcement ensure

continued development of core skills. In KS4 and 5, the curriculum becomes increasingly personalised. Students choose from a wide range of academic and vocational pathways, including GCSEs, A Levels, BTECs, and NCFE qualifications. Lessons are delivered with a focus on high expectations, deep understanding, and applied learning. The curriculum is structured to reflect real-world contexts, with an emphasis on preparing students for further education, training, or employment. Leadership roles, entrepreneurial projects, and work placements offer further avenues for personal growth and future readiness.

Across all phases, Arbor's commitment to inclusion is evident. Differentiation is embedded within all planning, ensuring students with diverse needs, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those learning English as an additional language (EAL), receive tailored support. Individual Education Plans (IEPs), targeted interventions, and the use of assistive technologies allow all students to access the curriculum and make meaningful progress. The 'Responsive Learning Cycle' and 'Seeds of Growth' frameworks ensure continuous monitoring, reflection, and adaptation to meet individual needs. PSHE is integrated throughout the curriculum. From EYFS, students explore themes such as emotional intelligence, healthy lifestyles, digital safety, and ethical responsibility, addressed through initiatives such as sustainability projects and community service.

Thrive at the school is a dedicated support department that ensures students with SEND, receive inclusive, high-quality education. Tailored support is delivered through IEPs, in-class and one-on-one interventions, and life skills programmes. The team works closely with teachers to adapt learning experiences and embed inclusive practices across the school. Thrive also supports early identification of needs and provides continuous collaboration with families. Its goal is to help every student flourish academically, socially, and emotionally, creating a nurturing environment where all learners are empowered to reach their full potential.

Arbor's Positive Education approach creates a strong foundation for responsible citizenship and lifelong wellbeing. The school's unique emphasis on ecoliteracy runs as a unifying thread throughout the curriculum. Students engage in sustainability-focused projects, fieldwork, and innovation challenges that connect learning to real environmental and social issues. This not only reinforces academic content but also fosters a sense of agency and global responsibility.

The Arbor School offers careers provision, which begins in KS3, where students explore career pathways through tutor-led sessions and industry engagement. Personalised guidance supports subject choices in KS4, while Post-16 students benefit from diverse academic and vocational options, including A Levels, BTECs, and specialist qualifications. The Futures Counsellor provides support for university applications and work experience. Programmes such as *UniFrog* and *Careers Champions* foster ambition and real-world readiness.

5.2 Teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding, meeting the standard for BSO.

Across all phases of the school, teachers demonstrate expert subject knowledge and employ a wide repertoire of engaging, evidence-informed strategies that support, challenge, and extend learning. Lessons are thoughtfully structured and adapted to meet the needs of all learners, reflecting exemplary levels of differentiation and inclusive practice. Teachers are reflective practitioners, engaging in ongoing professional development and collaboration. Teachers' enthusiastic delivery and commitment to personalised learning foster a love of learning and recognises the individuality of each student.

In EYFS, continuous provision is carefully curated to promote exploration, independence, and creativity. Collaboration and high-quality questioning effectively develop thinking skills. In the best lessons, students are challenged to explain their understanding. In an FS2 lesson a child stated that there were 17 children at school, explaining, "There is a 10, a 5 and a 2 (referring to the self-registration board). 5 and 5 make 10, and 5 and 2 more is 17".

In KS1, collaborative learning and peer assessment are integral features, with effective questioning enhancing critical thinking. Students are focussed and engaged in their learning, showing independence and enthusiasm for challenges. Students understand the importance for feedback to make progress. A year 2 student confidently explained the different feedback in their book, "Purple marking is my friend's and is for feedback, green marking is my teacher's and blue marking is my marking. T is what I did good and G is what I need to work on to improve my work".

Across KS2, teaching is dynamic and rigorous, underpinned by inquiry-led approaches and enriched through eco-literacy and real-world applications. For instance, year 5 students explored persuasive writing through an innovative 'Consequence Walk', while students in year 6 engaged in sustainability-themed inquiries, demonstrating advanced reasoning and ethical awareness.

Teaching in KS3 is underpinned by high expectations and a commitment to excellence. Lessons are consistently well-planned, engaging, and intellectually stimulating. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and use a wide range of strategies to meet the needs of all learners. Classrooms foster curiosity, independence, and collaboration, with students showing motivation and confidence. This was evident when students explored the challenges of living in the middle ages in Britain, engaging deeply with historical contexts.

Post-16 teaching is equally robust. In the best lessons, such as a year 12 global perspectives, high engagement and effective use of open-ended questioning are

evident. Teachers integrate retrieval practice and reflective plenaries, ensuring learning cohesion and cognitive challenge.

Assessment practices across the school are robust, consistent, and clearly aligned to learning intentions. Teachers employ a range of formative strategies within lessons to drive continuous improvement, including self- and peer-assessment, live marking, verbal feedback and cold calling. The school has a rigorous and well-embedded marking and feedback system that is used age-appropriately throughout the school. Students are given time to reflect on feedback, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. The use of personalised targets is evident in books and students are aware of their next steps.

Technology is used to enhance assessment and personalise learning, with platforms such as *Seesaw* and *Sparx* supporting progress tracking and learner engagement. Summative assessments, such as *GL Progress Tests*, are used to evaluate student progress and attainment, and benchmark against international averages. Throughout KS4 and 5, individualised feedback through mock exam analysis and performance-based tasks allows for targeted academic improvement.

The Thrive team supports teachers to create inclusive opportunities for learning for all students. It also provides excellent support and challenge for EAL and SEND students through targeted interventions. As a result, these students make exceptional progress. Throughout the school, Thrive students are given every opportunity to succeed and excel, with individualised learning plans, targets and assessment tracking. In addition, students learn life skills such as cooking, gardening and small business enterprise, including baking and selling cookies on a weekly basis, to prepare them for future life experiences.

5.3 Standards achieved by pupils

The standards achieved by students are outstanding.

Students' behaviour and attitudes, both in lessons and around the school, are exemplary. An ethos of mutual respect is evident in students' relationships with their teachers, other adults and their peers. As a result, learning environments are calm and purposeful, and students feel safe to take risks in their learning. Attendance across the school is excellent, with an average 97%. Students arrive on time to school and their lessons, and are eager to learn.

In EYFS, children make outstanding progress from their starting points. High levels of achievement are evident across all early learning goals. To support early language development, the school implements the *Read Write Inc* phonics programme and *Talk for Writing*.

By the end of KS2, nearly all students meet or exceed UK expectations across all core subjects. Evidence from *GL Progress Tests* shows 89% of students in English, 84% in mathematics and 95% in science, meet or exceed UK national standards.

In the secondary school, academic outcomes remain excellent. Subject departments use detailed attainment and progress trackers to support ongoing curriculum planning and targeted interventions. Individual academic targets are set for students in KS3, 4, and 5, informed by *CAT4* indicators and prior attainment. Almost all students in secondary meet or exceed UK standards, as confirmed by both internal data and external assessment results.

GCSE results are significantly above the UK national average, with 100% of students achieving grades 9 - 4 in English and mathematics, and 100% of students in global perspectives and 89% in science achieving A* - C.

Students' work is generally presented to a high standard. Presentation guidelines for students' work are in the front of all books, followed by students in all year groups. Some inconsistencies in handwriting are evident, however the school is taking steps to address these.

Robust tracking systems are in place to monitor and report on student performance, contributing significantly to strong academic outcomes. Data is rigorously analysed at multiple levels – class, year group, and whole school - to inform curriculum adaptations, interventions and support individual progress. The school leadership team plays a vital role in overseeing this process, effectively supporting teachers.

6. Standard 2 Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and meets the standard for BSO.

Students' spiritual development is strongly linked to the school's focus on ecoliteracy and sustainability. Through regular engagement with the natural world, for example, learning in biodomes, caring for animals, participating in farm-to-fork initiatives, and acting as environmental stewards (the Eco Council), students are encouraged to reflect on their place in the ecosystem and their responsibilities as caretakers of the planet. Across all phases, students are given regular opportunities for self-reflection. Mindfulness practices, pastoral check-ins, and reflection times encourage students to consider their thoughts and feelings, and develop a deeper awareness of self.

The school promotes a reflective approach to moral education, with standalone moral units in moral, social and cultural education (MSC) and strong pastoral systems that support students' personal growth. Students are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and choices, developing a strong sense of right and wrong, empathy, and social responsibility. Environmental sustainability is woven through the school's ethos and curriculum. Roles such as the Eco Council enable students to engage actively with ecological and ethical issues, reinforcing their sense of global citizenship.

The school fosters positive relationships and mutual respect, evident in the outstanding behaviour of students both in and out of the classroom. Mutual respect and kindness are evident throughout the community. In lessons and around the school, students listen attentively to their teachers and show respect toward their peers. They demonstrate a high regard for the school environment, taking great care of resources and showing pride in their surroundings.

A culture of kindness is consistently modelled and reinforced. Behaviour is managed effectively, with students showing a clear understanding of expectations and the consequences of their actions. Incidents of bullying and racism are extremely rare, any concerns are addressed swiftly and sensitively. Students' well-being is monitored weekly through tools such as *Komodo*, with a red-flag system ensuring timely intervention by the school counsellors. Relationships between staff and students are universally warm, respectful, and supportive.

Success and positive behaviour are recognised through a wide range of celebrations including house points, *Arborhavior* cards, and public recognition in assemblies. Students are enthusiastic, engaged learners who take pride in their school. Parents consistently express that they value Arbor for its welcoming, inclusive ethos, and describe it as: "A happy place where students can be who they want to be".

Leadership opportunities are a strong feature of school life and promote self-confidence, self-esteem, agency and character development. From EYFS, children take on responsibilities such as 'Tiny Teachers' and class jobs, progressing through to school ambassadors in KS2 and a wide range of democratically elected posts in secondary. Leadership roles, including global ambassadors, the Eco Council, house captains, and well-being ambassadors, empower students to take initiative and contribute meaningfully to school life. Leadership and teamwork are identified as key character traits of Arbor students, through the VIA survey. The house system, especially highlighted during events such as 'Family Fridays', fosters a sense of belonging and vertical connection across year groups, with older students supporting and mentoring younger peers. Students expressed that their house peers felt like “siblings, not just other students”.

A strong focus on student voice is evident across the school. Students feel valued and heard, with opportunities to contribute ideas, lead initiatives, and influence how diversity and inclusion are celebrated. The views of all stakeholders are actively sought through roles like the global ambassadors and initiatives such as surveys and conversation cafés for parents, which promote inclusion and community engagement.

Students' cultural understanding and global awareness are developed through regular cultural events, trips, and classroom discussions that encourage them to explore diverse perspectives and ethical dilemmas, for example, debates on kidney donation or environmental responsibility. In EYFS, children are encouraged to answer the register saying “good morning” using the home language of children in the class, and are proudly represented on world maps that display their cultural origins. In the primary phase, a cultural audit ensures balance in curriculum content, teaching resources and literature. In secondary, a cultural database and student consultation inform the celebration of events such as lunar new year, reflecting responsiveness to the diverse school population.

Daily practices, such as the respectful and unified pause across the school community to honour the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) National Anthem, exemplify a shared commitment to respect and cultural appreciation. This is integrated with the school's ethos, where British values are embedded across all curriculum subjects and particularly within the MSC programme. British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance, are also linked closely with UAE culture and Islamic values within curriculum planning.

7. *Standard 3*

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for welfare, health and safety is outstanding and meets the standard for BSO.

The school demonstrates an exemplary commitment to the welfare, health and safety of all students. A well embedded safeguarding culture is evident in every aspect of school life. Safeguarding systems are robust and reflect both UK best practice and UAE regulatory requirements. All staff and volunteers undergo safeguarding training; compliance is systematically tracked via the single central register (SCR) and staff training logs. Staff, parents, and students report that they feel safe and secure in the school environment.

The school has seven designated safeguarding leads (DSLs), all trained to level 3, supported by a further 23 level 2 trained staff. Extensive support is available to students from the school counsellor and a qualified psychologist, who provide regular wellbeing sessions, covering topics such as relationships, mental health, and healthy lifestyles. Students also benefit from peer-led support, with 11 KS4 students trained as youth mental health first aiders. A therapy dog, *Poppy*, plays a valued role in the wellbeing programme. Relationships between staff and students are mutually respectful, caring, and central to the school's culture.

The school's anti-bullying policy is clearly aligned with its safeguarding and behaviour policies. Staff receive induction and ongoing training to identify and address bullying. Initiatives such as anti-bullying week, restorative practices, and the 'Speak Out, Stay Safe' campaign promote a culture of openness and accountability. Secondary students contributed to the creation of an anti-bullying pledge, now displayed prominently in school, and QR code posters allow discreet reporting of concerns. All incidents are logged via *CPOMS* or *Nexquare*. Supervision is proactive, with staff present in corridors, lunch queues, and playgrounds.

Digital safety is embedded across the school. All staff have completed digital safety certification and engage in regular quizzes to keep knowledge up to date. Digital safety leads, a student ambassador programme, and a parent workshop ensure that the wider community is informed and supported in managing online risk.

'Ready, respectful, safe' represents a simple agreement which is consistently implemented as part of the *Arborhaviour* policy in EYFS and primary. The 'OPEN for Learning' framework (On time, Prepared, Engaged, No excuses) successfully promotes personal responsibility and high expectations for behaviour for students in secondary. Sixth form leaders serve as role models and support supervision. Structured behaviour interventions include behaviour contracts and improvement plans, with clear collaboration between staff and families. Students demonstrate a mature understanding of expectations, boundaries, and respectful relationships.

The school places a high priority on student wellbeing and pastoral care, with excellent transition arrangements, tailored support for gifted and accomplished learners, and specialist programmes such as futures counselling. Students in Years 9 to 12 benefit from access to *Unifrog*, and 96% of current Year 12 students are pursuing university applications.

The *Thrive* team provides outstanding support for students with additional needs. Identification of SEND and EAL learners is accurate and timely, with personalised support, including technology such as AI translation apps. High-attaining students also receive appropriate extension and challenge.

Attendance and punctuality are rigorously monitored. Registers are maintained accurately, and attendance is consistently high at 98%, with 97% in Foundation Stage, which is improving. These figures reflect the school's strong emphasis on engagement and parental communication.

Health and safety protocols are exemplary. A designated health and safety officer ensures compliance with Dubai Health Authority, municipality, and Civil Defence regulations. Weekly meetings of the health and safety committee support continuous improvement. The school holds a Gold Standard accreditation from the Dubai Health Authority for health and safety, including excellence in food preparation and air quality.

Daily checks are carried out on premises and equipment, and issues are swiftly addressed by the head of operations and operations team. The campus is clean, safe, and well maintained, with 30 cleaners operating on a dual-shift system and toilet checks conducted every 30 minutes. A full-time chef oversees healthy and nutritious food offerings, supporting the school's strong promotion of healthy lifestyles.

The school's first aid and medical provision is excellent. A clear medical policy is communicated through handbooks and training. A full-time doctor and three nurses provide professional care, and records are kept rigorously. All incidents are recorded on a live document system, ensuring transparency and follow-up.

Fire safety procedures are exemplary. Systems are tested monthly and fully documented. All rooms are equipped with smoke and heat detectors, and there are four evacuation chairs. Fire drills and lockdown procedures are well rehearsed and meet or exceed both UAE and UK expectations. Security is strong and consistent. The school uses CCTV, swipe cards, key fobs, and colour-coded lanyards to control access. A team of 16 full-time security staff monitors the campus around the clock. Access for external providers is tightly controlled; all external staff are required to complete comprehensive safeguarding and health and safety checks before being issued with school lanyards.

The school has a comprehensive risk assessment policy. Detailed, written risk assessments are carried out for all school activities, including lessons, field trips, and swimming. These are reviewed regularly and actioned effectively, ensuring student safety at all times.

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

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

The Arbor Governing Board including the Advisory Governing Council (AGBAC) plays a vital role in the leadership and development of the school. The board has a clear vision that reflects British educational values, with strong commitments to inclusion, sustainability, and academic achievement. This vision aligns with both the national curriculum and the UAE's educational priorities. All board members undergo full background checks, including police clearances, in line with both UK and local legal requirements.

Governance at Arbor is strategic, supportive, and accountable. The roles and responsibilities of board members are clearly defined to ensure effective oversight. Regular meetings, school evaluations, and collaboration with leaders help the board remain focused on school improvement and long-term planning. Investment in staff training and school resources reflects the board's commitment to ongoing development.

Staff recruitment follows safer recruitment practices based on UK guidelines and is fully compliant with UAE laws. All staff complete a thorough recruitment process including ID checks, verification of qualifications, right-to-work documentation, and where applicable, International Child Protection Certificates (ICPC). For staff with international experience, additional checks are carried out to confirm their suitability.

Arbor has a strong teaching team. Around 78% of teachers are UK-trained and qualified, holding PGCE, QTS, or NPQ certifications. This ensures the school delivers high-quality British education across all phases. Early Career Teachers (ECTs) are supported through structured mentoring and training, aligned with the Early Career Framework.

Continuous professional development (CPD) is a priority. Staff engage in CPD through platforms such as *StepLab* and *National College*. Many also take part in NPQs or other advanced studies. Training is linked to school improvement goals and supports staff in both developing their practice and advancing in their careers.

Staff wellbeing and morale are high. A positive and supportive working environment is maintained, and teachers report feeling valued and listened to. This contributes to strong staff retention and consistency in teaching, which in turn supports high student outcomes. Performance management is clearly structured, with regular feedback, meaningful targets, and alignment with school development plans.

Safeguarding is embedded in the culture of the school. All staff are trained in UK safeguarding procedures, and Arbor uses the *CPOMS* system to securely record and track concerns.

9. *Standard 5* The premises and accommodation

Premise and accommodation of the school is outstanding and meets the standard for BSO.

The school campus is spacious, exceptionally well-maintained, and thoughtfully designed to stimulate learning. The environment is uniquely aligned with the school's vision for sustainability and ecoliteracy, while also supporting the full delivery of the national curriculum across all key stages. A distinctive feature of the school is its 'living classrooms', which include climate-controlled biodomes that simulate tropical ecosystems. These biodomes serve both academic and pastoral functions, housing reading spaces, nurseries, and project-based learning environments that support science, sustainability, and wellbeing. Additional natural spaces include the reflection garden, a quiet central space promoting calm and mindfulness. The BioPark, where students engage in sustainable agriculture practices, and the school's apiary, where students learn about bees and harvest honey, further enhance environmental education, whilst also producing crops for the school's kitchen.

Specialist learning facilities include science laboratories, music rooms, design and technology suites, a music technology studio, black box theatre, and a fully equipped auditorium. The well-stocked library supports reading, research, and independent learning. Children in EYFS enjoy readily accessible outdoor spaces that support exploration and child-led discovery learning. The school also provides excellent sports facilities, including two swimming pools, a large gymnasium, and multiple outdoor areas for physical education and recreation. Specially modified furniture and assistive technology support students with additional needs, with age-appropriate resources available in focus intervention rooms.

Classroom environments are well-ventilated, temperature-controlled, and benefit from sensor-activated lighting. Outside lighting ensures the school site is accessible after dark. Acoustic design has been implemented across all learning spaces to minimise noise. Toilets are plentiful, age-appropriate and clean, with checks every 30 minutes. Water does not present a risk of scalding. Adapted disabled toilets include grip rails. Drinking water is widely available from water fountains located throughout the campus; the supply meets Dubai's regulatory standards and is routinely tested.

The school's medical clinic is professionally staffed and well-equipped, ensuring effective response to short-term medical needs as well as for those with more complex needs. Onsite kitchens and canteens adhere to Dubai Municipality food safety regulations. Meals are served hot using bain-maries and prepared in dedicated kitchen spaces.

Daily maintenance is rigorous. A large cleaning and facilities team, managed by an experienced operations and maintenance manager, ensures all areas are hygienic and fully functional. Safety, cleanliness, and compliance are prioritised across the site.

10. Standard 6

The provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information provided by the school to parents, carers and others meets the standard for BSO.

The school's website is clear, well-structured, and contains a wealth of information relevant to existing and prospective families. The school's vision, values, and approach to equality and diversity are clearly articulated, ensuring transparency and inclusivity. A dedicated parent information section includes access to key school documents and policies, such as admissions, school lunches, transport, academic calendars, uniform guides, welcome packs, scholarships, and payment policies.

Communication with parents is highly effective, taking place through a range of platforms and face-to-face interactions. During drop-off and pick-up, members of staff, including senior leadership, are visible and accessible, promoting a strong sense of community. In EYFS, teachers greet children personally at the classroom doors, providing parents with immediate and informal opportunities to share relevant information or raise concerns.

The school makes strong use of digital platforms to maintain regular and timely communication with families. Tools such as *Seesaw*, *O Track*, *Pupil Progress* and *Zenda* are used to share newsletters, updates, and academic information. While parents appreciate the breadth of communication, some expressed concern over the number of platforms used. The school has acknowledged this and is working to streamline communication systems.

Parents feel well-informed about their child's attainment and progress. Academic reports are described as personalised and meaningful, with students contributing reflections on their own learning, which parents find particularly engaging. Regular updates and two-way communication for students in Thrive, are well maintained through daily messaging, ensuring parents of students with additional needs are closely involved in their child's development.

Support for non-English-speaking parents is well established. While core communications are issued in English, key surveys are available in Arabic, and additional support is offered by staff to help parents interpret newsletters and other school communications. This contributes to a strong sense of inclusion and accessibility.

The school places a high value on community engagement. Events such as international day, where parents run cultural stalls, as well as open days and parent workshops, strengthen relationships and reinforce the inclusive, community-centred ethos of the school. The school is described by parents as a "united community", where their voices are welcomed and heard. Many parents praised the school for being highly responsive to suggestions and continually seeking to improve communication and partnership with families

11. Standard 7

The school's procedure for handling complaints

The school's procedure for handling complaints meets the standard for BSO.

The school has a clear and well-structured complaints policy and procedures. The policy is transparent, accessible, and designed to promote resolution at the earliest possible stage, while ensuring fairness and confidentiality.

The policy outlines the stages for raising and resolving complaints. Initially, concerns are raised and addressed informally with the relevant individual or department. This early step promotes open communication and timely resolution, which parents are encouraged to use as a first course of action.

If concerns are not resolved informally, the process moves to a formal complaint stage, where complainants are required to submit their concern in writing. The school commits to acknowledging all formal complaints within three working days. An internal investigation is then conducted, and the parent is notified of the outcome within ten working days.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the formal response, they have the right to request an appeals hearing. The appeals panel consists of four to five members, including at least one person independent of the school, ensuring impartiality. Hearings are scheduled within 15 working days of the request, and parents may choose to be accompanied by another adult. A written decision is provided within ten working days of the hearing.

The policy reflects a prompt and responsive approach. It places a strong emphasis on the confidentiality of all complaints. At every stage, sensitive information is handled appropriately and with discretion. The school has demonstrated adherence to the process through a case study that followed all procedural steps correctly, ensuring that complaints are managed in a way that is both fair and consistent.

The school has received no complaints which have been escalated to a panel hearing since the previous inspection report.

12. Standard 8

Leadership and management of the school

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding and meet the standard for BSO.

The school's leaders show drive, commitment and passion, and work with unstinting effort to drive school improvements. Leaders at all levels have a good understanding of the school's strengths and improvement priorities; data-driven self-evaluation is a strength of leadership. Senior leaders are experienced, working in unity to guide the school through its ongoing growth and development.

In a model of distributed leadership, middle leaders are given autonomy to trial and implement strategies, based on action research and data. Newly appointed leaders are supported in their role through formal and informal processes, including line manager and peer mentoring. Aspiring leaders are given opportunities to work alongside existing leaders, in preparation for possible future roles. The school also supports leaders through formal qualifications such as NPQ.

Staff professionalism and development are seen as key drivers to school improvement. Performance management is based on a coaching culture, with an open-door policy to classroom drop-ins, which foster effective development conversations. Professional development is linked to individual targets as well as whole school priorities, much is delivered in-house by staff identified as having strengths in specific areas, which they are encouraged to share.

A strong focus on well-being, for all members of the school community, includes targeted support where needed, provided in a sensitive manner. The Thrive department supports students, teachers and parents. Relationships across the school are a strength, based on the personalised approach taken for each individual, building a real sense of community for all stakeholders.

The school's vision, and driving force behind the school's ethos, is clearly shared with all stakeholders and understood by all. It has a significant impact on all aspects of school life, from the curriculum, through the school's physical design and into aspects such as a sustainable school uniform. The school's owners, board of governance and leaders of the 'Centre for Abundance' are united in their commitment to educating the next generations to make a real difference to the world.

The school's finances are very well managed. The school is well equipped, with state of the art teaching facilities and resources. Staffing levels are high, allowing for a personalised approach to student welfare and education, with well qualified and experienced staff.