

The British Overseas School, Karachi

Vacancy: Head of Primary

Joining Date: As soon as possible; August 2019 at the latest



A. The British Overseas School

The British Overseas School (BOS) is a highly successful, not-for-profit, co-educational school in Karachi, Pakistan. We pride ourselves on the community feel of the school, the high academic attainment of our students and our strong emphasis on personal development.

Founded in 1958, the BOS is a single-form entry school with classes from Pre-Nursery through to I/GCSE. The majority of our 330 students are of Pakistani origin, although families join us from all over the world in the world. Generally they are accustomed to high quality international or British education. These are the standards that we seek to offer and to maintain.

British education is embedded in Pakistan, with approximately 750 schools claiming to be “British” in some manner or other. The BOS stands out from the crowd by offering a contemporary British style of education. We use the National Curriculum of England as our framework, we employ contemporary teaching and assessment techniques and we measure our standards and achievements against British *independent* schools and the best international schools.

*In May 2018 the BOS became the first school in Pakistan to achieve **British Schools Overseas (BSO)** status. The accreditation report described the school as “Good with Outstanding Features”. Two of those “outstanding features” were the school leadership and the primary division*

1. Academic Standards

High academic standards are very important to us and to the families who trust us with their children’s education. Therefore, we have high expectations of our staff, students and parents; we work in partnership to ensure that all of our students flourish. Academic achievement is an important part of this.

In the Primary School, alongside teacher assessment, we use the INCAS assessment scheme to evaluate performance at the end of every academic year. The figures for 2017-18 are below:

Key Stage	Reading		Mathematics	
	In Advance of Age	1 Year or More in Advance of Age	In Advance of Age	1 Year or More in Advance of Age
Key Stage 1	88%	63%	92%	56%
Key Stage 2	85%	68%	82%	59%

In the Secondary School students are prepared for Edexcel I/GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. Generally, students sit 9 – 11 subjects in their final year. The results for the last two years are shown below:

	2016-17			2017-18		
	Number	%	Cumulative	Number	%	Cumulative
A*	100	42%	42%	107	55%	55%
A	63	26%	68%	39	20%	74%
B	45	19%	86%	30	15%	90%
C	19	8%	94%	16	8%	98%
D	7	3%	97%	4	2%	100%
E	6	2%	100%	0	0%	100%
Total	240	100%		196	100%	

2. Personal Development

For many years the BOS has had a great reputation for helping children grow into well-mannered and confident young people. We do this not only in the classroom, but on the sports field and the stage; around the school and on trips. Everything we do should be a learning and growing experience for our children and students.

After-school activities at the BOS are enriching and challenging; but, in a city such as Karachi, they are also a central part of family life. Our sports and football nights, our productions and concerts, our parties and film shows are all highlights of the school year for children and their parents. They contribute a great deal to the family feel and the community spirit within the school.

An important part of our school improvement plan is to enhance the opportunities available to all of our children and students by making the BOS a more “out-going school”. By this we mean

looking beyond our own boundaries to engage more fully with other schools in the city, in the region and globally.

For secondary students this means community service projects, in-city and international competitions and all of the opportunities that membership of Round Square offers. Initiatives have begun to take place in the Primary School, but we intend to extend these opportunities to give our younger students more exposure and stimulation through interaction with other children in the city and beyond.

3. Curriculum & Structure

The BOS Primary School uses the National Curriculum of England as its framework for delivery. However, we make adjustments according to our own priorities and the local context. For example, Urdu is a compulsory element of the curriculum from Nursery through to the end of KS3 – the vast majority of students take the IGCSE.

In fact, alongside Urdu, students also study French from KS1 and in January, and KS2 in April, 2018 we were able to add Mandarin. We intend that Mandarin will also be a compulsory addition to the secondary curriculum (Years 6 and 7) in 2018-19. Given Pakistan's ties with China, a Chinese language component to the curriculum has been a long-standing ambition.

In the primary school the humanities and creative elements of the curriculum are addressed via the International Primary Curriculum (IPC). This cross-curricular learning programme suits our desire for active and integrated learning.

The curriculum *is vertically integrated* in the sense that it allows continuous study and progress from the EYFS stage through to the I/GCSE years. This is largely due to the fact that we use the NC as the framework for our curriculum.

The EYFS years makes an excellent provision for children's development of personal and social skills. Assessments are made and evidence recorded to form a Learning Journal for each child as well as informing reporting on student progress relative to NC objectives.

Therefore students move to more formalised education supported by a wealth of evidence on their progress. Shortly after children move into the Reception class they are assessed using the Durham University CEM Base assessments.

A similar process is followed at the end of each year and key stage. It is very rare for a student to be held back a year for any reason, and when they progress a very thorough handover is undertaken to ensure continuity in the next step.

Four years ago the transition to the secondary school was especially problematic for Year 6 students. The 'step' was a struggle, which interrupted progress. As a result the decision was made to transform the structure of KS2. We moved from class teachers to subject teachers. This allowed continuity within subject areas, as well as accountability. It also required students to

move between rooms, as in secondary (albeit along a short corridor). In addition, we moved Year 6 into the secondary school, on a “Secondary Lite” timetable (8 subjects rather than 15).

The results of these changes have been excellent, for Years 3-5 and for Year 6.

4. Teaching at the BOS

The teaching staff is made up of a mix of expatriate and local teachers. In the Primary School all class teachers are UK qualified (or the equivalent). In each class they work in teams of Assistant and Support Teachers. The former are anchored to a subject and a Key Stage, for example Key Stage Literacy or Key Stage Numeracy. The Assistants move with their subject and are intended to give extra expertise in specific areas. The latter are anchored to a class, move with their class and give more general support to the children.

The use of teaching teams in this way means that the adult to student ratio in most Primary School classes is 1:5, which is excellent when compared to most international schools.

Children with learning difficulties, of which there are very few at the BOS, receive further support through our SEN Manager.

For all of our staff Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a priority. This is provided at many levels: in-class mentoring, in-house training, international CPD courses (usually in the Gulf States) and, ultimately, NPQ leadership qualifications for middle and senior leaders.

5. The BOS Parent Community

As in any school, our parents are a very important part of our community and are expected to be partners in every aspect of the education of their children.

With this in mind, the school runs regular workshops to facilitate more effective parent understanding and contribution. These are very important because the educational experience of our parent body has, in many cases, been significantly different to the BOS. Changes to the style of mathematics teaching stand out as an example of a steep learning curve for many parents.

Parents also contribute a great deal to the school in terms of their time. Last year over 100 parents volunteered to help the school across a variety of events. This includes volunteers for class activities as well as PTA sponsored events. The PTA at the BOS is especially strong and active, making a wider range of events possible.

6. Governance of the BOS

The BOS is a not-for-profit organization. Our Patron-in-Chief is the British High Commissioner. Currently the school is governed by a Trust and Board of Governors. The Board of Governors includes the British Deputy High Commissioner, the Director of the British Council as ex officio members, as well as elected parent governors and prominent members of the wider community.

B. The Role & the Person

Currently the Primary School is led by the Principal, supported by three very experienced Key Stage Managers (EYFS, KS1 and KS2). The Key Stage Managers are also class/subject teachers.

Given the school's ambitious plans for improvement, the Board of Governors, in conjunction with the Whole School Leadership Team, have decided that a Head of Primary is an essential addition to our staff.

Whilst we are pleased with and proud of our progress to date, we believe that a Head of Primary, largely focused on school improvement, will be a valuable asset as we seek to improve still further.

1. Distributed Leadership

In a small school, such as the BOS, the dispersal of leadership is not only desirable, but also essential. We at the BOS believe that our school “punches above its weight” in terms of achievements in all areas; that is only possible because the whole staff pulls together and works as a team and individuals not only take responsibility, but welcome it and the challenges that accompany it.

The new Head of Primary will be expected to enhance the leadership styles that are already in place.

2. Educational Philosophy

At the BOS we believe in high standards in all things. Perhaps, in some respects, we believe that the old ways are the best. But at the core of what we do must be a determination to provide the best possible education for our children and students – an education that works. An education that brings academic achievement certainly, but an education that brings personal growth through a range of qualities including: confidence, resilience, creativity and independence.

Our teachers are always exploring and reflecting on approaches and methods that can improve school life for our children. Some may be fashionable, others less so, but the litmus test for us is “does it work?” If we cannot exhibit critical thinking ourselves, how can we expect it of our children?

We feel that we have a Primary School, indeed a whole school, that works well, which does provide very good growth both academically and personally. Therefore, we are not seeking a revolution or radical change; we are seeking a Head who shares our vision and who can take the school closer to the realization of that vision. A head who can travel our journey with us, rather than turn us around to start anew.

3. Leading People

It is a simple, but fundamental tenet of life at the BOS that people make the difference – especially in education.

A curriculum is simply a document; technology is simply a box of electronics. What matters most to children and students are the people with whom they work: the people who interpret the curriculum; the people who make the most of the technology. Beyond these basic requirements of good teachers, we are looking for individuals who have strong emotional intelligence. We are looking for people who genuinely care, people who listen, people who reflect, and people who inspire.

We expect a Head of Primary to model all of these characteristics as well as having qualities such as sound judgement, an analytical command of data, good communication skills and a sense of humour.

C. Karachi and Pakistan

We understand that Pakistan may not be high on many people's lists of desirable locations. How could it be when the media coverage of the country is generally so negative? But how well do you know Pakistan? How well do you know Karachi?

Pakistan is one of the most populous countries in the world (around 220 million) and Karachi one of the world's megacities (23 million). There is much more to both than biryani, cricket and terrorism.

Karachi is a vibrant and lively place to live, but not in a conventional sense. The social scene in the city is one that you have to work at, and staff approach it in a number of different ways. Many of the staff spend time socialising together, however the wider community is welcoming, whether it be expatriate or local. Many of the school staff are based here permanently, or have made an effort to establish friendships with both ex-pats and local people beyond the school community.

There are many excellent restaurants and coffee shops in the city. The food on offer ranges from very tasty local cuisine, such as kebabs, curries and wonderful breads, to a variety of European, Japanese, Chinese and Thai restaurants. Eating together is a major social activity here, and it is provided for very well. To give you an idea of price: a local meal would cost as little as 2GBP, or, on average, 3-4GBP. The most expensive restaurants (typically Japanese food) would be approximately 20GBP. Of course, there is a wide range of restaurants in-between.

Pakistani people are friendly and hospitable. They are more than happy to invite you to join them as a guest for dinner, parties and balls, and, of course, weddings.

Some staff take the opportunity to use the numerous local gyms to exercise and swim at the end of the day. The city also has a number of well-attended churches.

The range of cultural events is increasing rapidly. Traditional musical events are held across the city, and it is possible to go to the cinema and the occasional play. The art scene in the city is thriving with many galleries, all carrying local art to suit everyone.

Karachi is a very good stepping off point for travel. We are just over an hour from the UAE, which is attractive to many people for its culture, shopping and beaches. Abu Dhabi and Dubai are also our nearest airport hubs, offering flights all over the world. However other Gulf States (for example Bahrain, Oman and Qatar) are now offering stiff competition, which has extended our choice of carrier. There are also direct flights eastwards to Bangkok and Hong Kong.

The pound is generally strong against the rupee, which helps to compensate for price rises. To give you an idea of the level of prices, the figures below are taken from the Numbeo website (www.numbeo.com):

Restaurants	Average
Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant	1.46 £
Meal for 2 People, Mid-range Restaurant, Three-course	8.74 £
McMeal at McDonalds (or Equivalent Combo Meal)	3.50 £
Domestic Non-Alcoholic Beer (0.5 liter draught)	1.49 £
Imported Non-Alcoholic Beer (0.33 liter bottle)	2.04 £
Cappuccino (regular)	1.27 £
Coke/Pepsi (0.33 liter bottle)	0.23 £
Water (0.33 liter bottle)	0.16 £
Markets	
Milk (regular), (1 liter)	0.56 £
Loaf of Fresh White Bread (500g)	0.32 £
Rice (white), (1kg)	0.77 £
Eggs (regular) (12)	0.64 £
Local Cheese (1kg)	4.23 £
Chicken Breasts (Boneless, Skinless), (1kg)	2.07 £
Beef Round (1kg) (or Equivalent Back Leg Red Meat)	3.14 £
Apples (1kg)	0.85 £
Banana (1kg)	0.52 £
Oranges (1kg)	0.72 £
Tomato (1kg)	0.42 £
Potato (1kg)	0.23 £
Onion (1kg)	0.24 £
Lettuce (1 head)	0.27 £

Water (1.5 liter bottle)	0.33 £	
Bottle of Non-Alcoholic Wine (Mid-Range)	2.77 £	
Domestic Non-Alcoholic Beer (0.5 liter bottle)	1.11 £	
Imported Non-Alcoholic Beer (0.33 liter bottle)	1.79 £	
Cigarettes 20 Pack (Marlboro)	0.93 £	
Utilities (Monthly)		
Basic (Electricity, Heating, Cooling, Water, Garbage) for 85m2 Apartment	47.28 £	
1 min. of Prepaid Mobile Tariff Local (No Discounts or Plans)	0.01 £	
Internet (60 Mbps or More, Unlimited Data, Cable/ADSL)	16.04 £	
Sports And Leisure		
Fitness Club, Monthly Fee for 1 Adult	12.51 £	
Tennis Court Rent (1 Hour on Weekend)	5.53 £	
Cinema, International Release, 1 Seat	3.50 £	
Clothing And Shoes		
1 Pair of Jeans (Levis 501 Or Similar)	13.44 £	
1 Summer Dress in a Chain Store (Zara, H&M, ...)	22.28 £	
1 Pair of Nike Running Shoes (Mid-Range)	32.26 £	
1 Pair of Men Leather Business Shoes	24.32 £	

Overall, this makes Karachi an inexpensive place to live when compared to better known cities such as London, Dubai or Bangkok.

Unfortunately, Pakistan is in the news frequently. Clearly there are security issues. However, for the most part, the frequent incidents occur in the north of the country. Karachi has tended to be left alone, and suffers only very occasional outbreaks of violence. Expatriate teachers are housed in the Defence Housing Authority area, which is a large, quiet and affluent suburb of the city. As in any metropolis there is street crime; but we are miles away from the high profile targets of the inner city.

Karachi is very much what you make of it. We have staff who are out at the weekends, and we have others who prefer a quieter lifestyle. It is a city where an ability to be independent helps greatly, and where a little 'get up and go' will certainly make life easier. If you are looking for a home from home then Karachi is perhaps not the best place to come, but if you are looking for something different then it is a wonderful opportunity.