

British International School Riyadh

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia



Founded in 1979 amid Riyadh's diplomatic and oil community, this multi-campus day school pairs A-Levels with the IB Diploma.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	71/100
Academic outcomes	71/100
University placement	70/100
Prestige & heritage	74/100
Alumni network	73/100
Facilities	78/100
Transparency	72/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

British International School Riyadh sits in a narrow but important bracket in the city: an established **1979** day school that runs a British route and the IB side by side, rather than forcing families into one philosophy too early. That matters. In a market where schools often lean hard into either exam-driven British orthodoxy or broad-brush internationalism, BISR gives pupils a clearer academic fork at sixth form with A-Levels and the IB Diploma both in play. For internationally mobile families, that dual-track offer is **genuinely useful**, not decorative. English and Arabic both sit in the language profile, the school is non-religious, and the age range runs from **3-18**, which gives parents continuity without the disruption of a compulsory move at 11 or 16.

Its market position is straightforward: premium, long-established, and built for Riyadh's expatriate and diplomatic strata rather than the bargain end of the sector. The average annual day fee across the full age range is **\$24,000**, which places it in serious-company territory and means parents should expect substance, not glossy rhetoric. The school's IBO accreditation gives the IB side formal credibility; the more important point is that the school has existed long enough to avoid the *start-up fragility* that still affects newer international schools in the Gulf. This is not a school trading on novelty. It trades on institutional longevity, a broad age span, and a curriculum structure that keeps options open late into secondary school.

Why shortlist it? Because BISR offers a combination that remains *hard to replicate* in Riyadh: established roots in the city, a non-religious setting, English-medium education with Arabic in the mix, and a choice between British and IB pathways at the point when those choices carry real consequences. The published university destinations are modest rather than chest-beating — Northeastern University, Monash University and Bristol University each listed with **1** recent destination — and that restraint is *refreshingly honest*. This is not a school selling itself on inflated destination mythology. It will suit families who value continuity, international transferability and academic choice over brand theatrics. The pupil who will thrive here is adaptable, outward-facing and comfortable in a *cosmopolitan* school culture: a child who may move countries, wants recognised qualifications, and benefits from keeping both A-Level depth and IB breadth on the table until the final stretch.

STRENGTHS

- One of the oldest international schools in Saudi Arabia, founded in 1979 as the Riyadh Continental School before being incorporated into the Saudi Arabian International Schools system in 1981.
- Delivers a modified English National Curriculum through to IGCSEs and A-Levels, and benchmarks itself against private and leading state schools in Britain, with long-standing links to UK universities.
- Subject to British Schools Overseas inspection by Penta International, a provider approved by the UK Department for Education to inspect schools overseas.
- The main Al Hamra campus was rated as offering a good quality of education with many excellent features at its most recent inspection, while several satellite campuses (Al Saqr, Al Sharq, Tabuk and Taif) were rated Outstanding in 2025.
- Draws a genuinely international community of over 90 nationalities, giving pupils exposure beyond a single expatriate bloc.

TRADE-OFFS

- Fees rise steeply through the school, with Sixth Form (A-Level) tuition running to roughly SAR 100,000-135,000 a year, placing it at the premium end of Riyadh's British-curriculum market.
- The school now operates across seven campuses spread around the Kingdom, and inspection outcomes are not uniform across sites, so quality of provision can vary depending on which campus a family is assigned to.
- Some satellite sites, such as the Salwa primary campus built for BAE/MOD families, sit roughly 30km from the main Al Hamra site, meaning geography and transfer arrangements need careful checking before enrolment.
- Parent reviews on independent aggregator sites are mixed, with at least one flagging concerns that the level of education did not match the fees charged.

ADMISSIONS

Entry points run from Foundation Stage 1 (age 3) through to Year 12 across BISR's multiple campuses. As a registered community school in the Kingdom, admissions priority is given to British and international students under Saudi Ministry of Education rules. Families should specify which campus (Al Hamra, DQ, Salwa or others) they are applying to, as capacity, fees and inspection ratings differ by site; the newer DQ campus has been expanding year groups and capacity is not yet uniform across stages. Waiting lists can apply in popular year groups given the school's long-established reputation among expatriate families.

WTS RATING 

This profile summarises editorial research by World's Top Schools. Verify all admissions dates directly with the school before submitting. Sources are cited in the full online profile at WorldsTopSchools.com/schools/sch_bda531f63a.