



## International Real Story

The Emirates International School - Meadows in Dubai

BlueSky



## Evidencing the trajectory of one of Dubai's most successful schools

**How BlueSky raises staff confidence and improves the quality of teaching and learning.**

### About the school

Emirates International School - Meadows in Dubai is an International Baccalaureate School within the Meadows and Springs Community with 1,663 students, including 85 different nationalities. It takes pupils aged two to eighteen – offering a seamless transition between all IB programmes.

The school teaches all four categories of the International Baccalaureate and the results are outstanding, with students moving on to prestigious universities across the world including Oxford and Stanford.

In summer 2017, 94% of students aged 11-16 gained the Middle Years Programme (MYP) Certificate with students exceeding IB World Averages in 18 out of 20 subjects. 96% were awarded the Higher Diploma, with two students achieving 45 points and one student achieving 44 out of the cohort. All students on the Diploma Programme were entered for the award. This amounted to three students with the highest result in Dubai.

### What were the challenges?

Andrew Williams, Head of High School, took up his post just a year ago. “The school was already rated very highly and part of my job was to make sure that it continued to develop systems and strategies to ensure the school moved forward with a clear vision” said Andrew. “We needed a robust system to document evidence of ongoing success. It had to be easy to use and had to offer clear benefits to all the staff.”

Another challenge is that the UAE National Agenda stipulates that by 2021 UAE students will rank among the best in the world in reading, mathematics

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and science and all students will be expected to have a strong knowledge of the Arabic language.

The school also wanted to make lesson observations an even more positive experience for colleagues. “Morale is important, and we ensured that throughout the observation process good practice was celebrated whilst areas of development were acknowledged and bespoke support was implemented,” said Andrew.

### How is BlueSky helping?

“BlueSky is used right across the school for every lesson observation, all performance management and professional development, as well as providing space for staff to record their views and reflections.

“As we gather evidence of strengths and expertise we can set up professional development sessions which typically last 20 -30 minutes,” said Andrew. “One teacher said: ‘I have never had so much valuable professional development in all my years of teaching’”

BlueSky has 28 different sections for our current observation outcomes and many teachers achieve an outstanding grade in many categories. This has proved to be a catalyst for discussion. Staff are willing to reflect and talk about how they can move on from one grading to another and the evidence that they will need to provide.

The school plans to raise standards of teaching and learning in all subjects by making good use of lesson observations, helping staff to reflect on their strengths and areas for development whilst devising a programme of relevant and timely professional development.

### What is the impact?

This year the school is focusing on identifying strengths and areas for development and lesson observations are a key part of that. “We can provide feedback very quickly after lesson observations,” Andrew commented. “Whereas in the past I would have been entering data into spreadsheets and then making comparisons, the system does it all and the Head of Department can discuss the evidence with the member of staff almost immediately.”

As a result, the quality of lessons is better than this time last year. Staff constantly look back at the results of previous observations, reflect on areas for development and check to see if they have addressed them in their planning.

The school is saving time and money by growing in-house expertise. It is an investment. As a result of this staff are now helping deliver and be an integral part of running professional development sessions in school and have identified some real hidden talent. “We are using our hard-working staff. They were doing an amazing job every day and had so much positivity and good practice to share.”

### What's next?

The school intends to continue embedding BlueSky and make sure everyone is using it and benefiting, regardless of age or IT confidence. The school is now also using the Projects element of BlueSky for collaboration to continue to develop bespoke professional development programmes for staff at all levels.

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Tel: +44 (0)1483 880004 | Email: [info@blueskyeducation.co.uk](mailto:info@blueskyeducation.co.uk) | Twitter: [@BlueSkyMatters](https://twitter.com/BlueSkyMatters) | Web: [www.blueskyeducation.co.uk](http://www.blueskyeducation.co.uk)