# Inspection Report
## 2016 - 2017

DUBAI
Knowledge المعرفة

GEMS International School- Al Khail

Curriculum: IB

Overall Rating:

**Good**

"We are keen to prepare the new generation that is ready to be creative and innovative to help us achieve our ambitions for even greater prosperity"

Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum

# Contents

## General information

| | |
|---|---|
| Location | Al Khail |
| Type of school | Private |
| Opening year of school | 2013 |
| Website | www.gemsinternationalschool-alkhail.com |
| Telephone | 043396200 |
| Address | Al Khail |
| Principal | David Ottaviano |
| Language of instruction | English |
| Inspection dates | 20 to -23 February 2017 |

## Students

| | |
|---|---|
| Gender of students | Boys and girls |
| Age range | 4 - 16 |
| Grades or year groups | KG1 - Grade 10 |
| Number of students on roll | 1212 |
| Number of children in pre-kindergarten | N/A |
| Number of Emirati students | 36 |
| Number of students with SEND | 58 |
| Largest nationality group of students | Arab |

## Teachers / Support staff

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of teachers | 116 |
| Largest nationality group of teachers | British |
| Number of teaching assistants | 60 |
| Teacher-student ratio | 1:10 |
| Number of guidance counsellors | 3 |
| Teacher turnover | 18% |

## Curriculum

| | |
|---|---|
| Educational permit / Licence | IB |
| Main curriculum | IB |
| External tests and examinations | IB |
| Accreditation | none |
| National Agenda benchmark tests | MAP, CAT 4 |

# The DSIB inspection process

In order to judge the overall quality of education provided by schools, inspectors consider the six standards of performance that form the basis of the UAE School Inspection Framework (the framework). They look at children's attainment and progress in key subjects, their learning skills and their personal and social development. They judge how effective teaching and the assessment of learning are across the school. Inspectors consider how well the school's curriculum, including activities inside and outside classrooms, meet the educational needs of all students. They judge how well schools protect and support children. In addition, inspectors judge the effectiveness of leadership, which incorporates governance, management, staffing and facilities.

Inspection judgements are drawn from evidence gathered by the inspection team, including observation of students' learning in lessons, review of their work, discussions with students, meetings with the staff, parents and governors, and review of surveys completed by parents, teachers and students.

## Judgements are made on a six-point scale

DSIB inspection teams make judgements about different aspects, phases and subjects that form the work of the school, using the scale below, which is consistent with the framework.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Outstanding** | Quality of performance substantially exceeds the expectation of the UAE |
| **Very good** | Quality of performance exceeds the expectation of the UAE |
| **Good** | Quality of performance meets the expectation of the UAE (This is the expected level for every school in the UAE) |
| **Acceptable** | Quality of performance meets the minimum level of quality required in the UAE (This is the minimum level for every school in the UAE) |
| **Weak** | Quality of performance is below the expectation of the UAE |
| **Very weak** | Quality of performance is significantly below the expectation of the UAE |

- The school opened in September 2013. The current principal has been in post since January 2016. Student and teacher numbers have increased since the school opened. There are now 1212 students on the roll, supported by 116 teachers, providing a teacher to student ratio of 1:10.

- Strengths identified during the first inspection included the strong personal development of students, the very good health and safety arrangements, and the effective partnerships with parents.

- Recommendations following the school's first inspection included the improvements to the accuracy of self-evaluation, the production of a whole school action plan that showed measurable impact on student achievement, and the introduction of more rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.

**GEMS International School - Al Khail** was inspected by DSIB from 20 to 23 February 2017. The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. The section below summarises the inspection findings for each of the six performance indicators described in the framework.

- Attainment and progress are generally acceptable in Islamic education and the Arabic languages, apart from weak judgements Arabic as a first language in MYP, and weak progress in Arabic as an additional language in MYP. Attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science across all phases are generally good overall, as is the learning skills of students in all phases.

- The personal development of students is very strong. They have a good awareness of Islamic values and other cultures. Their social responsibility skills are well developed.

- Teaching and assessment are generally good in most subjects across the school. Teachers in almost every subject encourage the use of an inquiry approach. Assessment practices have improved across the school. Increasingly, assessment data is used to set targets for the next steps in learning.

- The design and implementation of the curriculum is largely good, but adaptations are required to challenge the most able, and in Arabic and Islamic education to improve students' attainment and progress.

- The arrangements for keeping children safe and secure are very good, while the overall care and support is good. The school site is very safe, and there is very effective promotion of healthy and safe living.

- The effectiveness of leadership and management are good overall. The procedures for self-evaluation have been strengthened. Parental partnerships are good, while governance is acceptable. The effective day to day management ensures the school runs smoothly with any concerns being rapidly addressed.

## What the school does best

- The personal development of all students.
- The use of teaching coaches to improve learning opportunities across the school.
- The involvement of all staff in the analysis of data to inform adjustments to teaching and adaptations to the curriculum.
- The arrangements for keeping students safe and secure.

## Recommendations

- Governors must improve Islamic education and Arabic languages by:
  - ensuring that the interests of the Islamic education and Arabic departments are represented on all  leadership groups including the advisory group, and  the senior and middle leadership teams
  - immediately devising and implementing a strategic plan to raise attainment and improve progress, thereby holding all leaders  accountable for their actions.
- Leaders should adapt the curriculum to ensure that:
  - subject specific skills and expectations in the PYP and MYP are integrated fully into every discipline
  - all MYP students are provided with opportunities to  initiate and engage with the action and service  elements of  the curricula
  - the needs of the more able learners are met by providing appropriate challenge in all lessons.

## National Agenda Parameter

In 2014, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of UAE, and Ruler of Dubai, launched the UAE National Agenda 2021, with education being a prime focus. The National Agenda includes two major objectives developed with the intention of placing the UAE among the most successful countries that provide world-class education. By 2021, it is expected that the UAE will feature in the top twenty countries in the 'Programme for International Student Assessment' (PISA) test and in the top fifteen countries in the 'Trends in Mathematics and Science Studies' (TIMSS) test.

In response to this, each participating school was issued a report on their students' performance in these international assessments and, in addition, they were provided with clear targets for improving their performance. In 2015, KHDA launched the National Agenda Parameter, which is a method for measuring and monitoring schools' progress towards achieving their individual National Agenda targets through the use of external benchmarking assessments.

**The following section focuses on the impact of the National Agenda Parameter in meeting the school's targets:**

- Progress towards meeting the National Agenda targets is better in science than in mathematics and English.
- The school meets the registration requirements for the National Agenda Parameter.
- Although the National Agenda Parameter data does not include all grades, the school has been thorough in the analysis of the data it has available. Senior management including class teachers have provided valuable insights into the progress of individual and groups of students.
- The analysis of data is influencing the scope and sequencing of the curriculum in both PYP and MYP in mathematics and science. There have been significant changes across the school to the provision made for students to improve their reading skills. These adjustments have been more closely aligned in the school's curriculum as opposed to the requirements of TIMSS and PISA.
- Data on groups and individuals is used to differentiate instruction in all grades. National Agenda Parameter data has been used to identify students in need of additional support and to highlight weaknesses in the coverage of specific knowledge or skills.
- All students have access to their national benchmark assessment results. The results are used in student-led conferences to set individual targets. Students are aware of the importance of research skills and routinely use technology to conduct research in English and science, but less so in mathematics.

Overall, the school's improvement towards achieving its National Agenda targets meets expectations.

## Innovation in Education

The UAE Vision 2021 sets the aspiration for the UAE to be among the most innovative nations in the world. The National Innovation Strategy sets the context for 'innovation' and 'innovative leadership' and provides a basis for evaluating schools in order to deliver a world-class education for all children in the UAE.

### Promoting a culture of innovation:

- The school has appointed leaders of innovation. They are driving the innovation agenda in all aspects of provision. However innovation is not yet embedded in all subjects. A strong culture of innovative thinking is being promoted. Assessment methods are being adapted, especially in PE. For example to incorporate the use of video capture to enable students to evaluate their performance. Work ethic and entrepreneurial thinking are encouraged through events such as "students' expo". Opportunities are being identified in the MYP programme of inquiry (POI) to nurture innovation skills, such as use of robotics in art and music.

## Overall school performance

Good ⬆

## 1 Students' achievement

| | | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Islamic education** | Attainment | Not applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable ⬆ |
| | Progress | Not applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable ⬆ |
| **Arabic as a first language** | Attainment | Not applicable | Acceptable | Weak |
| | Progress | Not applicable | Acceptable | Weak |
| **Arabic as an additional language** | Attainment | Not applicable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| | Progress | Not applicable | Acceptable | Weak ⬇ |
| **English** | Attainment | Acceptable | Good ⬆ | Acceptable |
| | Progress | Good | Good | Good |
| **Mathematics** | Attainment | Good | Good ⬆ | Acceptable |
| | Progress | Very good ⬆ | Good | Good ⬆ |
| **Science** | Attainment | Good ⬆ | Good | Good ⬆ |
| | Progress | Good ⬆ | Good | Good |

| | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Learning skills** | Good | Good | Good |

## 2. Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

|  | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personal development | Very good | Very good | Very good |
| Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures | Good ⬆ | Good | Good |
| Social responsibility and innovation skills | Good | Good | Good |

## 3. Teaching and assessment

|  | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teaching for effective learning | Good | Good | Good ⬆ |
| Assessment | Good ⬆ | Good ⬆ | Good ⬆ |

## 4. Curriculum

|  | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Curriculum design and implementation | Good | Good | Good |
| Curriculum adaptation | Good ⬆ | Good ⬆ | Acceptable |

## 5. The protection, care, guidance and support of students

|  | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding | Very good | Very good | Very good |
| Care and support | Good ⬆ | Good | Good ⬆ |

## 6. Leadership and management

| | |
|---|---|
| The effectiveness of leadership | Good ⬆ |
| School self-evaluation and improvement planning | Good ⬆ |
| Parents and the community | Good |
| Governance | Acceptable ⬇ |
| nt, staffing, failities an | Good |

## 1. Students' achievement

| 👫KG | | |
|---|---|---|
| Subjects | Attainment | Progress |
| Islamic education | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| Arabic as a first language | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| Arabic as an additional language | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| English | Acceptable | Good |
| Mathematics | Good | Very good ⬆ |
| Science | Good ⬆ | Good ⬆ |

- Most children's attainment in English is in line with national and international standards. Many children make rapid progress in their learning, when measured against their starting points. As a result of listening attentively to stories, children can predict what might happen next. This contributes to the development of good communication skills. Overall, children make good progress in their speaking, listening, reading and writing. This enables them to read simple words and sentences accurately, and write sentences using correct spelling.

- The majority of children have knowledge and skills in mathematics that are above national and international standards. They quickly acquire, and accurately use, mathematical language to describe size, weight, capacity and position. As a result, skill development is strong, enabling complex patterns to be interpreted well, and accurate predictions to be made in sequencing. By the end of KG2, children make very good progress in most aspects of mathematics.

- In science, children's knowledge, skills and understanding are above curriculum standards. In KG1, children demonstrate strong observation skills when exploring motion. They develop good scientific vocabulary and knowledge when learning how magnets work. They can combine these skills and knowledge to carry out simple investigations. By the end of KG2 understanding and skill development are strengthened in other aspects of science such as the environment and conditions needed to sustain life. Overall, children in KG make good progress in the development of age-appropriate scientific language, concepts and skills.

| PYP | | |
|---|---|---|
| Subjects | Attainment | Progress |
| Islamic education | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Arabic as a first language | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Arabic as an additional language | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| English | Good ⬆ | Good |
| Mathematics | Good ⬆ | Good |
| Science | Good | Good |

- In Islamic education, most students attain levels that are in line with curriculum standards. They can explain some ideas conveyed in the verses of the Holy Qu'ran. However, students still need to apply the Islamic concepts in their daily lives. Although students develop a range of appropriate skills at an acceptable rate, their recitation skills are still underdeveloped. Not all groups of students make the same rate of progress in lessons, as work is insufficiently differentiated to match the abilities of all students. Overall progress reaches expected levels during lessons and over time.

- In Arabic as a first language, students' attainment is broadly in line with the UAE Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum standards. However, the attainment of a minority of students in the lower grades is below the expected levels. Students in the upper grades of PYP demonstrate acceptable speaking and reading skills. However, their writing skills are weaker and underdeveloped. This results in students making acceptable progress in reading and speaking, and slower progress in writing.

- In Arabic as an additional language, the attainment levels of most students are in line with curriculum expectations. Students' listening skills are adequate. They can read and use simple, familiar words and phrases. Although in lessons most students make adequate progress in acquiring basic language skills, but progress is hampered by lack of challenge and differentiated work that specifically matches students' needs. Insufficient opportunities are provided for students to extend their conversational skills.

- Student attainment in English is good overall. International assessment results show that students' abilities to use language is stronger than their reading comprehension. They confidently communicate in lessons, using a range of genre and texts in a variety of ways, including debating. Reading is used to extend thinking and make connections to the real and imagined world. External test results indicate that a majority of students make better than expected progress when compared to their individual starting points.

- In mathematics, students make good progress. This year's external benchmark tests and internal data demonstrate improving attainment over time. The majority of students are exceeding curriculum standards on these benchmarking assessments. The standard of students' class work suggests the majority attain above curriculum standards. Groups, with the exception of the gifted and talented students, make good progress in their learning from their starting points.

- In science, recent international benchmark tests indicate that the large majority of Grade 4 students attain at or above international standards. There is insufficient data for other grades to establish trends over time. However, internal data indicates that a majority attain above curriculum standards. A review of the quality of students' work and observations of lessons indicate that most students make good progress in their learning; developing inquiry skills and understanding of scientific method. There is some confusion between a hypothesis and a prediction, but the majority of students are developing the skills defined in the schools learner profile.

| MYP | | |
|---|---|---|
| Subjects | Attainment | Progress |
| Islamic education | Acceptable ⬆ | Acceptable ⬆ |
| Arabic as a first language | Weak | Weak |
| Arabic as an additional language | Acceptable | Weak ⬇ |
| English | Acceptable | Good |
| Mathematics | Acceptable | Good ⬆ |
| Science | Good ⬆ | Good |

- In Islamic education, most students attain levels that are in line with curriculum standards. They can infer and identify rulings and guidelines from verses of the Holy Qur'an, however, their ability to reflect on the verses in depth is not as strong. Most students progress at an acceptable rate, but some make less progress because work in lessons is not always differentiated to match abilities, nor is it sufficiently challenging. Recitation skills are less developed than other subject specific skills.

- In Arabic as a first language, the attainment level of students is below the UAE MoE curriculum standards, which is similar to the previous year. Many students have significant gaps in their speaking, reading and writing. A lack of opportunity to extend and apply these skills impacts on their development. The lack of curriculum modification to bridge those gaps hinders students' progress in lessons and over time. Overall, most students' progress in developing their language skills is below expected levels.

- In Arabic as an additional language, students' attainment levels are broadly in line with the expectations for additional language learners. Students' listening skills are adequate and they are familiar with simple words and expressions. However, in lessons, their progress is inconsistent, and for a significant number of students, it has declined compared to the previous year. Opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in a meaningful context are limited and their independent writing is weaker as a result.

- In English, student attainment is acceptable when measured against international and curriculum benchmarks. This is particularly the case in classes where most students speak well and respond to texts, demonstrating appropriate understanding. In Grade 6, students identify imagery such as similes and idioms and linguistic functions during a literature study. There have been a significant number of new students who have moved into the phase and assessments show that the majority are making good progress when measured against their individual entry points.

- Assessments show the majority of students in mathematics are reaching the curriculum standards, but there is under-performance by some of the most able. This is due to a lack of opportunity for extended problem solving. Students' internal data is generally in line with international benchmark assessments and shows good progress during the year and over longer periods of time. In lessons and work samples, the majority of students demonstrate better than expected progress in most aspects of mathematics. However, the acquisition of mathematical knowledge is stronger than skill development.

- In science, in recent tests, most Grade 6 and Grade 8 students attained above international standards. By Grade 8, a majority of students make good progress. Internal data is aligned with external assessments and verifies the understanding that a majority of students attain above curriculum standards. During lessons, a majority of students acquire good scientific vocabulary and develop scientific skills quickly, enabling independent investigation. Students are enhancing their capacity in line with the schools learner profile. By Grades 9 and 10, students are acquiring research skills, as illustrated by very detailed genetics project work, which they confidently share with peers.

|  | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Learning skills | Good | Good | Good |

- The majority of students are enthusiastic learners. As a result they are fully engaged in their learning and take increasing responsibility for it. This is shown in Physical Education (PE) where students who are not swimming are fully engaged by using filming to coach those in the water. In science, they take responsibility by independently reviewing assessment rubrics and setting targets for their next investigation.

- Oral communication skills are sufficiently strong to enable students to frequently and confidently share their learning with partners. However, the outcomes of these discussions are not always checked for accuracy. Students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are fully integrated in most collaborative groups, confidently contributing to discussions, often supported by their peers.

- The structure of the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme ensures students build cross curricular links well. In MYP, a variety of opportunities are provided to enable students to effectively make connections with the world around them.

- Research skills are developed well as inquiry learning is central to science. In the KG phase, children classify natural and human made materials and in Grade 6 the relationship between speed, time and distance is explored. Integrated use of technology supports the learning in English and in Islamic education in PYP.

## 2. Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

| | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personal development | Very good | Very good | Very good |

- Most students have a very positive attitude towards their school, teachers, peers and learning. Students approach their school work with enthusiasm. They demonstrate self-reliance and independence both within classrooms and around the school.

- In lessons and across the school, most students are well behaved, courteous and considerate to the needs of others. They resolve differences maturely and independently. In the few instances, where a small number of students do not exert the same level of responsibility and discipline, their peers act quickly and maturely to resolve any issues.

- Students enjoy very good relationships with their peers and staff. In lessons and around the school, they work and cooperate well with each other. When required, they seek clarification and support from their teachers in a confident manner.

- Students clearly understand the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. Sport is a key component of their daily routine and they often ensure their food is nutritious. They heed the clear guidance provided by the school on healthy eating when choosing which foods to eat from the canteen.

- Overall, students' attendance is very good. Students ensure that they are on time for the start of lessons. They fully understand the link between good attendance, punctuality and positive learning outcomes.

| | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures | Good ⬆ | Good | Good |

- Students have a developing understanding of how Islamic values influence the community in which they live. They appreciate that life in the UAE is different but some students lack an in-depth understanding of many aspects of the UAE culture.

- Students know key facts about buildings, cities, clothing and modern business. They participate in various activities that broaden their awareness of the UAE culture and make them more familiar with it. The influence of history as a concept is still underdeveloped for most students.

- Students are aware of the importance of the relationship between their own culture and that of others. They know it is important to discover the differences between cultures, as well as the similarities. Their interest and knowledge about the different cultures of their peers is developing well.

|  | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social responsibility and innovation skills | Good | Good | Good |

- Students are aware of their responsibilities as members of the school and wider community. For example; Grade 9 students take on leadership roles by organising after school clubs for younger students. Other students are actively involved in providing social contributions through volunteering in the mosque, charities, and by supporting children in KG; they read stories in Arabic to them.

- Students demonstrate a strong work ethic, which is illustrated by their engagement in a wide range of innovative projects. Increasingly they take the initiative to develop innovative projects and enterprises. For example, the Innovation Expo enables students to market their ideas effectively to others and develop entrepreneurial skills.

- The school environment is enhanced by the care shown by students. They participate in a range of activities to deepen their understanding of conservation issues to a good level. Older students initiate and pursue projects that raise awareness of sustainability and conservation.

## 3. Teaching and assessment

|  | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teaching for effective learning | Good | Good | Good ⬆ |

- The majority of teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject and in most core subjects, they understand the philosophy of the IB. This is also true of many teachers in other areas, including art and PE. Subject knowledge is secure in Islamic education and Arabic, but philosophical understanding of IB is less developed, especially in the MYP phase.

- Lesson plans are becoming standardised across all subjects and teachers plan to use an extensive range of resources. The classroom environment is effectively used for instruction, with appropriate displays of student work. Posters remind students of the schools learner profile, central ideas, key concepts and transdisciplinary links. These prompts support teachers to facilitate independent learning and encourage group collaboration. Almost all teachers apply good classroom management techniques to optimise the use of time.

- In the best lessons, teachers rarely answer students' questions without further exploration; either reverting to the student or drawing in others to offer suggestions. Dialogue in many lessons encourages reflection and risk-taking, helping students to understand that it is acceptable to be wrong. These strategies ensure students engage with their learning most of the time. Teachers regularly remind students to reflect using "what if" questions.

- Many teachers apply a range of strategies to identify and support groups of students. However, in many lessons, including Arabic and Islamic education lessons, there is insufficient challenge for the most able. In many subjects, teachers have a substantial knowledge of students who have SEND. Groups are often created to assimilate learners, but also to strengthen the learning of others.

- Inquiry is encouraged in nearly all subjects. It is particularly strong in science. For example; KG and Grade 1 students are encouraged to consider, "I see, I think, I wonder". In some mathematics lessons, teachers use innovative methods to collect students' responses, which leads to instant analysis and feedback using the classrooms interactive white board.

|  | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Assessment | Good ⬆ | Good ⬆ | Good ⬆ |

- Formative assessment of the curriculum using success criteria, peer and self-assessment, is regular and effective. PYP portfolios, learning journeys, check lists and rubrics provide valid assessment instruments. Internal assessments are now standardised and aligned with external assessment. This ensures reliability of assessments. Increasingly, assessment data is used to set targets for the next steps in learning.

- The school effectively uses MAP international benchmark testing to measure attainment and progress for students in KG2 to Grade 10, although it has only just started using the test for some grades in science. The school also uses CAT4 assessments to measure reasoning ability and student potential, but again not across all grades.

- Ongoing assessment data is accurately recorded so that the progress of individuals and groups can be tracked over time. The data is routinely analysed by senior and middle management and class teachers, each group focusing on aspects appropriate to their roles. Both senior and middle managers monitor the data collection, processing, analysis and responses to the analysis closely.

- Summative assessments and benchmarking data are used to adjust the scope and sequence of the curriculum. Formative assessment is being used with increasing effectiveness to modify both unit and lesson plans. Most teachers regularly monitor both individual and group progress, and some adjust their teaching very effectively to meet the needs of different groups of students.

- KG teachers give well-balanced feedback, encouraging children to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers across the school use their knowledge of the students to differentiate tasks, entry and exit points and assessments. Many teachers personalise learning for their students. All teachers can identify progress made by students when measured from their starting points using data and graphs.

## 4. Curriculum

|  | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Curriculum design and implementation | Good | Good | Good |

- The curriculum has a clear rationale predicated on the mission and vision of the IB, and focuses on developing internationally minded, global citizens. This is blended with aspects of the US Common Core Standards. Knowledge, concepts and skills that transcend subjects are explored through academic, creative, physical and practical components of the curriculum. The school meets IB compliance in PYP and MYP.

- Scope and Sequence documents for individual subjects provide continuity and progression within and between each stage of learning. The curriculum mapping in Islamic education and Arabic is not well developed. Aspects from the Common Core, PYP scope and sequences, MYP subject guides and information gleaned from internal and external assessments are integrated well. Regular communication between subject heads further supports continuity and transition between phases.

- Throughout the PYP phase, the inquiry, conceptual and transdisciplinary approach provides opportunities for students to pursue individual investigations within the units of inquiry. In preparation for progression to the IB Diploma next year, elective subject choices are offered to students in Grades 9 and 10. These include additional languages, individuals and societies, and drama.

- The transdisciplinary philosophy of the PYP phase and the conceptual nature of central ideas mean authentic links between subjects enhance the curriculum. Collaborative planning sessions and online tracking ensure all teachers make connections to the central idea. MYP phase teachers are starting to develop some interdisciplinary units. UAE MOE social studies foci are mapped into the curriculum at all levels.

- An annual curriculum review, involving all teachers, evaluates the balance and rigour of the PYP Programmes of Inquiry (POI) and MYP interdisciplinary units. Heads of subject consistently review scope and sequence documents. At the end of each unit in the PYP and MYP phases, all teachers are involved in formal reflection, and identify developments for the future.

- The UAE social studies curriculum outcomes are strategically mapped into the social studies scope and sequence document for PYP. In MYP the outcomes are initially mapped into history units e.g. the Grade 7 study of Islamic civilisations. Teachers guide students to explore aspects of social studies through robust, inquiry based questions that engage students in research, opinion formation and justification, analysing and predicting outcomes. Assessment criteria is shared with students, usually though rubrics, prior to the engagement in assessment tasks.

| | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Curriculum adaptation | Good ⬆ | Good ⬆ | Acceptable |

- The curriculum is planned appropriately to meet the learning needs of most students. However, Arabic as a first language is not sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of different groups of students. Learning centres and scaffolded activities support individual outcomes in the KG and PYP phases. The school's inquiry approach provides both support and challenge for students, including those with SEND. MYP phase unit plans show tiered levels of questions, but these are not consistently applied in lessons.

- Innovation as a product of critical thinking is an increasing feature. Engagement in school events such as a "Shark Tank" scenario support creative thinking. The extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for students to foster interests and passions through a range of academic, sporting and creative aspects including a mother tongue language programme. The service component of MYP is insufficiently developed.

Students develop a broad knowledge and understanding of the UAE culture, traditions and environment through integrated units of work. In PYP, units explore concepts such as 'migration' and 'water as a finite resource' while Grade 6 students use Dubai as a case study for exploring 'sustainability'. Special days such as National Day, Flag-Day and assemblies consolidate UAE connections.

## 5. The protection, care, guidance and support of students

| | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding | Very good | Very good | Very good |

- There are very effective procedures for safeguarding students. There is a programme throughout the year of educating students and parents about using the internet safely both in school and at home. Counsellors skilfully address any issues such as bullying and are sensitive to the needs of students as they grow older. They support students' well-being and are alert to any individual needs identified by staff.

- Site security is very good. The visitor management system is effectively applied by staff. All visitors are appropriately vetted. The school is clean and well maintained. Outdoor facilities are generally safe and there are many shaded areas for use at break times. Supervision levels are strong and effective.

- Termly audits of facilities supplement the daily routines of the facilities management department. Regulation safety checks are undertaken by either internal staff or through external contracts. Teachers who are planning learning visits outside of the school complete rigorous risk assessments. Regular drills, fire alarm testing and other evacuation procedures are completed effectively and efficiently. Records show detailed and rigorous analysis of these activities.

- The recently commissioned laboratories and workshops are safe. The facilities support access to all areas of the curriculum for all groups of students. The lifts allow access to all floors for students and staff with mobility impairments and evacuation escape chairs are placed close to lifts.

- There is very effective promotion of healthy and safe living. The work in the IB curriculum is supplemented by the work of counsellors and school nurses. The school cafés encourage a balanced healthy diet. Students are strongly encouraged to develop a sense of belonging. The newly established house system is having a beneficial effect on developing a corporate and healthy identity.

| | KG | PYP | MYP |
|---|---|---|---|
| Care and support | Good ⬆ | Good | Good ⬆ |

- Students throughout the school, are very polite and courteous. They form very good relationships with other students, with teachers and other staff. There is almost no disruption to learning during lessons because students are very effectively managed in class, in corridor spaces and other open areas.

- Attendance and punctuality are managed very effectively. Secure procedures ensure rapid staff responses to both lateness and absence, by making contact with parents. Attendance overall is very good and prompt starts to most lessons mean that little learning time is lost at transition times.

- The procedures for identifying students with SEND have been strengthened. The procedures begin early with teacher, parent and external information provided to staff so needs can be identified promptly. The identification procedures are accurate for most students. The work of identifying and fully meeting the needs of the gifted and talented is at an early stage of implementation.

- The systems to support students with SEND are developing well. With more training opportunities and guidance, staff are gaining in expertise in implementing modifications to the curriculum. The skilled SEND staff are ensuring that good provision results in good progress. The school makes appropriate use of outside support.

- The school has very effective systems to monitor the well-being, safeguarding and development of all students. They receive very good guidance from a team of counsellors and other staff and there are a number of examples of effective transition work. This is developing so that staff are able to offer guidance to students as they move towards higher education.

## Inclusion

| Provision and outcomes for students with SEND | Good ⬆ |
|---|---|

- The schools SEND leadership has been strengthened. Staff are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and determined to improve provision. They have developed secure systems and their self-evaluation of the department's work is accurate. There is a team of highly committed members of staff in the department and they are focussed on improving progress for all students. The SEND department has good capacity for further improvement

- Identification procedures begin early in a student's career in school and are consistently applied. Investment in SEND resourcing is resulting in skilled staff being appointed and improvements in the effectiveness of the department. Parents are fully involved in the identification process and the resultant range of information informs appropriate plans and policies.

- The school keeps parents very well informed of their student's progress and they speak very positively about the work of the SEND department. The liaison between staff and parents has been securely established and is having a very positive impact on improving outcomes for students.

- A broad and effective range of modifications to match student's needs are in place. The individual education plans (IEPs) are detailed, accurate and indicate, initially, what students can do. They include opportunities for student contributions and sections written in age appropriate language. The effectiveness of the role of additional adults identified in IEPs is yet to be evaluated.

- A range of information from students' work, over time, and teachers' on going assessments, show that most students are making good progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Students contribute to their educational programmes and, as a result, in most cases they display positive attitudes, improved behaviour and increasing independence.

## 6. Leadership and management

| The effectiveness of leadership | Good ⬆ |
|---|---|

- The vision and direction set by leaders is focused on the delivery of high quality learning and personal development outcomes for students. The UAE priorities are clearly promoted and there is a strong sense of inclusiveness. There is a continual focus on improvement. However, the detail of the vision is yet to be implemented in all aspects of provision.

- As a result of the strengthening of middle leadership, leaders are now working collectively to improve outcomes for all groups of students. There is a clear understanding of best educational practices and how to use information to modify the curriculum and adjust teaching strategies. This understanding is enabling improvements to be secured in almost all areas of provision. However, students' achievement in Arabic declined in MYP.

- An ethos of calm, positive professionalism is evident in all areas of school life. Relationships are strong, resulting in distributive leadership and increasingly effective communication. However, the impact of this communication is not always consistent. There is a perception that some issues are not followed up and concerns not addressed.

- With the distribution of leadership and appointment of leaders of innovation, capacity is being built to sustain the improvements already secured. Creative and innovative approaches to overcoming barriers to learning are being encouraged, but they are not yet implemented in all disciplines. However, there is a collective commitment to continuous and sustained improvement.

- Improvements since the previous inspection are evident. The involvement of teachers and leaders in evaluating, monitoring and tracking students' achievements is having an impact. Teaching and learning coaches have secured improvements in classroom practice. While not all improvements are fully embedded, the commitment to sustain them is very evident.

| School self-evaluation and improvement planning | Good ⬆ |
|---|---|

- The systems for self-evaluation have been strengthened since the previous inspection. All staff are involved and evaluations are based on a range of evidence. The use of data analysis to inform the schools evaluations is a strong feature and enables all staff to be aware of actual and potential student underachievement. The specific strategies required to precisely address all concerns, are in the early stages of development.

- The addition of the teaching and learning coaches has significantly improved the monitoring of learning. The school is fully aware of where teaching and learning is strongest and where it requires development. However, the approaches necessary to quickly improve acceptable teaching are not yet being applied routinely and systematically.

- School improvement planning (SIP) process has improved. The targets set in the SIP are aligned to the outcomes of the school evaluation. The plans are detailed and under careful scrutiny. However, targets for all areas requiring improvement including Islamic education and Arabic languages are not sufficiently detailed to ensure improvements are sustained.

- Significant progress is being made in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report. The processes for self-evaluation have been refined, and are continually being improved. Much effort is being deployed to use data accurately and identify what improvements are required to advance students' achievements. The progress students are making is being tracked more accurately. As a result, good improvements in learning outcomes are evident in most, but not all, curriculum areas.

| Partnerships with parents and the community | Good |
| --- | --- |

- Many opportunities are provided for parents to become involved with their children's education. Parental information events are effective. They inform parents about aspects of the curriculum including PYP and MYP. The parents association is working closely with the school to increase the number of ways parents can support their children's learning. The involvement of all groups of parents in every aspect of provision is not yet embedded.

- The school responds well to parental concerns and are keen to communicate clearly about all aspects of provision. Regular newsletters and web portals provide information about curriculum and learning opportunities. However, the systems and approaches required to ensure communication is timely and targeted, is in its early stages of development.

- Parents are clearly informed of their children's academic progress and their targets for improvement. However, practical next steps in learning, which can be supported by parents, are not consistently identified. Parental consultation meetings are successful in sharing predicted progress and learning outcomes.

- The parents association is playing an increasing role in establishing and supporting partnerships that will enhance learning and develop the students' role within the community. Students' charitable projects and events are effectively bringing families together.

| Governance | Acceptable ⬇ |
| --- | --- |

- While there is representation of different stakeholders, there is no clear representation of those with interests in Islamic education and Arabic languages. The Advisory group work diligently to represent the different views of parents however, a student voice is not evident.

- With the support of the advisory board, governors hold leaders to account for many aspects of the schools provision. Consequently many improvements are being seen. However, decisions taken and advice given, is not always tracked. Not all actions are followed up and their impact measured. As a result, the accountability required to secure improvements in Islamic education and Arabic, is not effective.

- The governors do not monitor the specific targets that relate to improvements in Islamic education and Arabic, sufficiently. Consequently targets for improvement are not fully implemented and are not sufficiently impacting on students' achievements.

| Management, staffing, facilities and resources | Good |
| --- | --- |

- The school operates well. Systems are effective. As a result attendance rates are very good; students are generally punctual and learning opportunities being provided support a good rate of progress in most subjects. Communication systems are improving and clear plans are in place to support further improvements.

- Most staff are suitably qualified and deployed to support good student achievement. However Islamic education, and the Arabic departments are not sufficiently represented on leadership teams. This restricts the systematic sharing of best practice to raise attainment and increase rates of progress. The use of teaching coaches improved learning opportunities across the school.

- The facilities are of a very high standard. New technology and other specialist rooms are awaiting completion and sign off. However, plans are in place to ensure that they are fully utilised to promote creative and innovative learning.

- There is an increasing focus on imaginative and innovative use of resources to support the implementation of the IB curriculum. This is more consistently effective in PYP and KG phases. With the support of innovation leaders and learning technologies being deployed effectively to ensure accuracy of assessments in lessons. This is particularly effective in PE.

## The views of parents, teachers and senior students

Before the inspection, the views of the parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form inspection judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

| Responses to the surveys | | |
|---|---|---|
| Responses received | Number | |
| Parents* | 2016-2017 | 295 |
| | 2015-2016 | 260 |
| Teachers | 102 | |
| Students | 221 | |

*The number of responses from parents is based on the number of families.

- Over a third of parents participated in the survey.
- Of those who responded, most were very satisfied with all aspects of the quality of education provided at the school.
- A small number of parents expressed concerns about communication, stating that it was not always clear what was required, to support their children.
- Some felt that although their concerns were listened to by leaders, they were not always acted upon.
- A large majority of teachers and students provided responses to their surveys. Most of the teachers were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's provision. Students were also positive. However, a few students did not agree that the school provided opportunities to develop their leadership skills.

## What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the inspection report. This should address:

- recommendations from DSIB
- areas identified by the school as requiring improvement
- other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school
- priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next school inspection will report on changes made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report, you should contact
inspection@khda.gov.ae