

INSPECTION REPORT

Raffles World Academy

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Raffles World Academy

Location	Umm Suqeim
Type of school	Private
Website	www.rafflesis.com
Telephone	04-4271351
Address	POB 122900 Umm Suqeim Dubai
Principal	Julian Williams
Curriculum	UK/IB
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	4-18 /KG-Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1931
Largest nationality group of Students	Arab
Number of Emirati students	154
Date of the inspection	20th to 23rd January

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The context of the school

Raffles World Academy, located in Um Sequim, was founded in 2008. The roll at the time of the inspection was 1,931 students, four to 18 years of age, from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The roll had increased by 25 percent since the previous inspection. Students came from a very wide range of countries. Around eight per cent were Emirati. The other nationalities included significant numbers of European and Asian students. The school curriculum was based on elements of the English National Curriculum and the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme. The school followed the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP). Students took International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examinations in Grade 10. Students in Grades 11 and 12 followed the Diploma Programme (DP) of the IB curriculum.

In addition to five senior leaders, there were 151 teachers, most of whom had appropriate higher education and teaching qualifications. Mainly as a result of the increased school roll, around one-third of teachers were new in the current session. Sixteen of those were in Kindergarten and primary, and the others were across a range of subjects in secondary, including four new mathematics teachers and four new science teachers. There were 30 classroom assistants. The Principal was in his second year in post. The head teacher of the primary phase had been in post since the start of the current session.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- Good progress in the secondary and post-16 phases in all key subjects;
- The response from students to the many opportunities for them to exercise leadership and take responsibility, particularly in relation to community and environmental issues;
- Implementation of the curriculum, particularly in the secondary and post-16 phases;
- The school's arrangements for the health and safety of students, its inclusive approach to students with special educational needs, and the good progress of the students whose needs had been identified;
- Various aspects of leadership, including the involvement of parents, the work of the Advisory Council, and the high quality facilities.

Recommendations

- Use accurate assessment results to identify the next steps in learning for individual students, and match tasks to learning needs more effectively;
- Ensure that all teachers learn from and share the best teaching practice which exists in the school, to make the quality of lessons more consistently positive;
- Implement child-centred approaches more effectively in the Kindergarten, and ensure that all children have sufficient opportunities to explore the world around them and to work independently, with appropriate adult intervention as necessary;
- Improve procedures for identifying and meeting the needs of gifted and talented students.
- Improve the effectiveness of professional development activities for teachers, particularly for those who need to be trained in aspects of the IB curriculum.

Progress since the last inspection

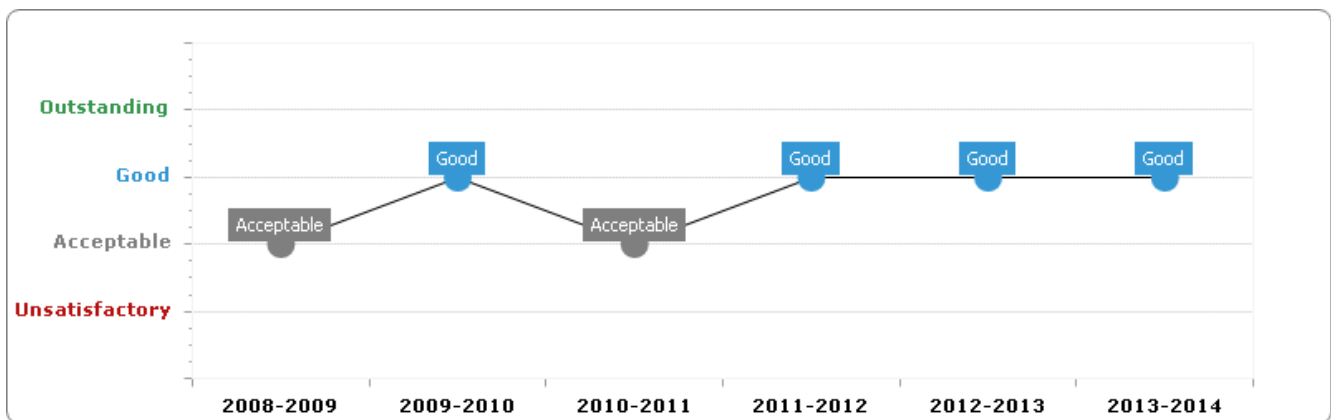
Progress in Arabic as an additional language in the secondary phase had improved from acceptable to good, but several aspects of progress or attainment in English and mathematics had decreased, particularly in the kindergarten and primary phases. The quality of teaching and learning in the Kindergarten had decreased and was now acceptable.

Staff were making better use of assessment to track the progress of students in each phase across the curriculum. The criteria which staff used were aligned more closely to UK and international standards. Assessment in the secondary phase had improved and was now good.

There was an improved range of professional development activities for staff, with the aim of enhancing the skills of teachers. Despite improvements the training had not resulted in the delivery of a curriculum which was fully in line with UK and IB standards. Some new teachers were not fully conversant with the requirements of the IB curriculum, for example in science in the secondary and post-16 phases.

There was more rigour in the school's self-evaluation procedures but the overall process of planning for improvement had not yet had an impact on student outcomes.

Trend of overall performance



جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

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How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي
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How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was mainly acceptable in the Kindergarten and the primary phase, and mainly good in the secondary and post-16 phases. In Islamic Education, a majority of students in the secondary and post-16 phases had good knowledge and understanding of Islamic values and concepts. Students discussed topics such as fate and destiny from an Islamic perspective, with confidence. In Arabic as first language, listening skills were well developed, while other language skills were in line with expectations. At post-16, a majority of students demonstrated good reading and writing skills. In Arabic as an additional language, most students had appropriate conversational skills but students' writing contained frequent errors. In English, most children in Kindergarten listened well and responded to instructions. In the primary phase, students used synonyms to add interest to their writing. By the end of the secondary and post-16 phases, most students were reading with expression. They were able to analyse texts and express complex ideas clearly. Most children in Kindergarten could count to 20 and were comfortable working with numbers to 10. In the primary and secondary phases, students had good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of mathematical topics including statistics, shape, and number. Investigation skills were well developed by the post-16 phase but less well at other stages. In science, children and students had acquired skills in investigation and knowledge in most topics. In the post-16 phase, attainment in chemistry was less good than attainment in the other science subjects.

Progress followed a broadly similar pattern to that of attainment. In Islamic Education, progress in Holy Qur'an recitation and memorisation skills was slower than in other aspects. In Arabic as first language, students' progress was in line with expectations in all language skills except writing, where it was less positive. Older students made stronger progress overall, particularly in reading and in some aspects of writing. In Arabic as an additional language, progress was strong in writing and listening skills for secondary students. A significant number of students entered school with low levels of English skills. In Kindergarten, students made good progress in speaking and listening skills. At the other stages most students made good progress because they were increasingly successful in applying their reading and writing skills in different learning contexts. Most children in Kindergarten and students in primary were making progress in mathematics in line with expectations for their ages. Progress was helped by the design of the curriculum, in that topics were revisited at a higher level as students progressed through the year, particularly in Secondary and Post-16. Some outstanding examples of student enquiry were seen at the later stages. In science, students progressively developed their understanding and skills through inquiry, problem solving, and practical activities.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were acceptable in Kindergarten and good in the other phases. Most students were fully engaged in lessons in all subjects across the school. They were keen to learn. They had a growing awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses. Most lessons were characterised by good interaction between students and teachers. Almost all students were able to work together well and collaborate effectively, although this aspect was not as strong in Islamic Education and Arabic in the primary phase. In many of the better lessons, students confidently participated in class and group discussions, especially in the secondary and post-16 phases. Students could make good connections between new learning and the world around them. Most students were able to apply their learning to problems, although this feature was not strong in Kindergarten. In better lessons in the primary, secondary and post-16 phases, students worked with relative independence. They improved their critical thinking skills through questioning, research and evaluation of learning.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility was good in Kindergarten and primary, and outstanding in the secondary and post-16 phases. Community and environmental responsibility was outstanding. Students' behaviour and attitudes were well developed. They responded well to the wide range of opportunities to show personal responsibility. The Student Council, prefects and house captains, the Anti-Bullying Committee, the eco-team, and other groups all showed initiative. Relationships with staff were positive. Most students showed tolerance and empathy for others within their community. The importance of maintaining health and fitness was understood well and students, particularly the older ones, regularly took part in activities which promoted healthy living. The school's figures for the previous term showed good attendance, although the attendance during the inspection was less positive. Students had a good understanding of cultural diversity, particularly in the post-16 phase. They had a clear understanding of how Islamic values influenced life in Dubai. Children and students responded well to projects to encourage knowledge and appreciation of local and other cultures. Many students showed initiative by organising or taking part in charitable events. Knowledge and appreciation of local and other cultures were particularly well developed in the post-16 phase. Students were independent, resourceful and community minded. Almost all children and students demonstrated a positive work ethic. The school had provided students with a voice through a variety of interfaces with staff. Students had initiated a variety of environmental projects and activities inside and outside the school.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was acceptable in Kindergarten and good in the primary, secondary and post-16 phases. Almost all teachers had good subject knowledge which they used effectively to enhance learning opportunities. Lesson planning was good, with teachers setting out clear learning objectives. Most teachers provided a stimulating learning environment and successfully enhanced their teaching through the use of a range of appropriate resources. Most questioned students well and, in the best lessons, encouraged higher order thinking. They adopted a good range of teaching strategies, although some lessons involved too much teacher talk. The range of teaching approaches in Kindergarten was too narrow in a majority of classes, and this had a negative impact on learning outcomes for children. Most teachers gave positive feedback, encouragement and praise to students, and generated a good rapport with them.

Assessment was acceptable in the kindergarten and good in the rest of the school. The school was using accurate and reliable assessments and international benchmarks to inform teaching and learning. The data had been used to make some positive changes to the curriculum, lesson planning, and the provision of differentiated work for different groups in a number of subjects. Curriculum objectives had been translated into 'I can' statements which helped students to assess their own progress. In the best lessons, teachers gave helpful advice to students on what they needed to do to improve their work, although this aspect was inconsistent. Self-reflection, critical observation and peer evaluation were features of the best lessons in art and PE, in addition to core subjects. Assessment portfolios were used well by some kindergarten teachers and to support transition to the primary phase. The implementation of assessment in the Kindergarten had not yet led to better outcomes for children.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?

The quality of the curriculum was good in the Kindergarten and primary phase, and outstanding in the secondary and post-16 phases. The philosophy of the IB had been incorporated well into the secondary phase and matched with IGCSE requirements to provide sound preparation for the well planned challenge of the IB diploma programme at Post-16. The kindergarten curriculum did not have the full breadth of approaches required by the UK curriculum or the IB primary years' programme. The curriculum was comprehensive and well balanced, particularly at the later stages. Smooth transition for students through stages was facilitated by curriculum bridging projects. Systematic and regular curriculum review was done through collaborative planning in the primary phase and within subject areas in Secondary. Cross-curricular links were made well in the primary phase. The curriculum provided opportunities across Primary, Secondary and Post-16 for independent learning, research and critical thinking. There was an excellent

range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities offered across the school, and strong collaborative links with the community.

The design of the curriculum to meet students' needs was acceptable in Kindergarten and good in the other phases. The implementation of the kindergarten curriculum did not cater well enough for the needs of early childhood learners. Across the school, there was insufficient challenge for high achieving students. The curriculum was periodically modified, with the introduction of new subjects from time to time. The broad range of languages offered, including French, Spanish and Mandarin, reflected well the cosmopolitan composition of the school community. A wide range of subject choices at IGCSE and IBDP was available and regularly reviewed to provide best opportunities for students to study subjects of their choice which could broaden their career opportunities.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The site, buildings and equipment were exceptionally well maintained, and policies implemented well. Arrangements for student transport, supervision and security were excellent. Pastoral, health and welfare systems were exemplary. Physical and emotional health were maintained and accurately recorded by the clinic and counsellor. Students were encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle and well managed menus were based on a dietician's recommendations. Support for healthy lifestyles also came through physical education and sport clubs, life skills lessons, health education and many other lessons, for example a French lesson involving discussion of foods. The child protection policy was conveyed well. Induction procedures for new staff ensured that they were aware of their responsibilities.

The quality of support was good in all phases. Staff and student relationships were good. Attendance and punctuality were generally well managed. The school was inclusive. There were good systems to identify students with additional needs, but the number with diagnosed special educational needs was less than might have been expected in a school of this size. A particular strength was the manner in which teachers adapted the curriculum and the way in which students helped each other during lessons. The support provided in classrooms and withdrawal by SEN and EAL specialists ensured good progress for most students. The policy on identification and planning to support gifted and talented students was at an early stage of development. Support for the transition from primary to secondary was in place, although some parents felt that this needed development. Transition to the next stage of education or career was well supported by post-16 teachers and the counsellor.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The principal was building on the work he had achieved in his first year in post. He was aided by two heads of Primary and Secondary, the former a new appointment from the beginning of the current term. The heads were themselves supported by two deputies. There was a need for further development of teamwork among the senior leaders. Many staff had opportunities to take leadership roles and many responded well in leading or coordinating subjects or whole school responsibilities. The school had good capacity to be innovative in aiming for improvements.

The quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning was good. Staff used a range of systematic procedures for evaluating the quality of the school's work, including surveys, meetings, lesson observation and data analysis. The rigour and challenge of these processes was improving. The impact of self-evaluation and improvement activities was being seen in a few aspects of the school's work which had improved, but some aspects of attainment and progress had decreased in quality.

Links with parents and the community were outstanding, and were helping to enhance students' experiences. The parent association (PARIS) organised many events and initiatives, and helped parents to be involved, for example in giving educational talks to students. The group also brought parental concerns to the attention of the senior leaders, including for example; worries about shortages in staffing in certain subjects at particular stages. The group also supported the school by having a focus group on Arabic, and helped to facilitate after-school language clubs for parents. Some of the group's work was innovative, including a culture liaison volunteer whose role was to help different cultural groups among the parents to understand each other's values and outlooks. Communication between the school and parents was carried out well. A helpful new reporting format was being introduced. Good productive links with the local community were evident.

Governance was good. The Advisory Council had wide representation; from the owners, local culture, the business and education sectors, and parents, including representatives from PARIS. It met students and staff to take their views. The council provided helpful advice and guidance to the board of directors of the parent company. It exercised accountability too. It had helped to set up a database of supply teachers to try to reduce periods when classes did not have an appropriately qualified teacher. The council had a significant impact on the school, for example, through improvement of facilities, and a drive to improve certain aspects of teaching and learning. While some aspects were improving, attainment and progress of students remained difficult to improve significantly.

Management was outstanding. The school was run well from day-to-day. Some staffing shortages had recently been addressed, but the calibre of a few teachers was not up to the standard required to deliver

the school's curriculum. The premises and other resources were in very good condition and supply. Staff had engaged in a range of professional development activities, but certain aspects, including best practice in the early years, remained a priority. The library was a positive feature, well equipped with information technology resources and with an excellent range of books.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The attainment and progress of Emirati students and that of their peers were variable. In Islamic Education, progress of Emirati students was generally in line with that of their peers in Secondary but slower in the primary phase. In Arabic, their attainment and progress were similar to that of their peers in almost all grades. Progress in English in the Kindergarten was slower than that of other children, but it was generally in line with other students in the other phases. Attainment of Emirati students in mathematics and science was slightly lower than that of other students. Staff in all subjects monitored the attainment and progress of Emirati students closely. While the proportion of Emirati students attaining in line with expectations was broadly similar to other students, the proportion attaining beyond expectations was often less because they were not effectively challenged in their learning. The curriculum gave appropriate attention to local heritage and culture. Emiratis were represented on PARIS and on the governing bodies.

How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

The school was very inclusive, rejecting only those students whose needs could not be met. Support did not incur cost unless parents funded a shadow teacher. The SEN practice closely reflected policy. Baseline assessment was used in Kindergarten, and all students completed diagnostic tests on entry. Internal assessments were used to identify concerns, and external diagnoses were always sought. Teachers reviewed individualised education programmes regularly, and involved students, parents, shadow teachers and teaching assistants. There was no clear identification of gifted or talented students, although a draft policy existed. The department had provided workshops for staff on specific learning difficulties. Almost all teachers and assistants were aware of students' needs. Most lesson plans outlined modifications, including in-class support by peers as well as teaching staff. Some students received withdrawal lessons, others used technology. In the secondary phase, exam adaptation was common, with exemptions from Arabic or foreign languages. Other students had reduced IGCSE portfolios. A few followed a unique academic programme but joined the non-academic programme to assist with socialisation, physical and creative skills. Almost all students with SEN, seen during the inspection, progressed well in lessons.

How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?

Almost all teachers of Arabic as a first language had secure subject knowledge. In the primary phase, most teachers had detailed lesson plans which included clear learning outcomes. The teaching approaches they used were frequently overly didactic. They did not give enough responsibility to students to control their own learning, and, as a result, students' progress was limited. Most of the teachers in the secondary and post-16 phases used a more student-centred approach. There, most classes involved activities other than passive listening or routinely completing low-level tasks. In the best classes, independent learning and self-reliance were evident, including the use of ICT.

The school curriculum was based on the MoE standards. In the primary phase, the curriculum was restricted to carrying out tasks set out in textbooks. Worksheets and other materials did not challenge students sufficiently. More importantly, it was heavily focused on teaching aspects of grammar rather than developing language fluency and communication skills. In the secondary and post-16 phases, the curriculum was well planned and offered good levels of challenge for most students. It offered a balanced learning experience and was sufficiently focused on developing students' skills in reading and writing as well as regular opportunities for developing listening and speaking skills. However, modifications to address the specific needs of some students, particularly the underperforming, were limited.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

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

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	341	26%
	Last year	332	25%
Teachers	130		84%
Students	195		92%

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

Less than a quarter of the parents responded to their survey. Most teachers and students responded. Most parents, and most students who expressed an opinion, were satisfied with the quality of education. Parents who responded felt that their children were making good progress in most subjects, with the exception of Arabic as a first language, where the proportion was less. Most parents had positive views about the curriculum and teachers' help for students and almost all thought that their children enjoyed school. They said that the school was well led and that leaders listened to their views. Only a minority of parents were aware of the school's performance in international benchmark surveys. Most teachers were supportive of the school.

Most students felt that they were treated fairly and that the school dealt well with bullying. However, a minority of students thought that their teachers were not sufficiently well qualified and did not have the appropriate skills of teaching.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan 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 inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

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

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