

INSPECTION REPORT

International School of Choueifat

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT International School of Choueifat

Location	Al Sufouh
Type of school	Private
Website	www.iscdxb-sabis.net
Telephone	04-3999444
Address	PO Box 21935, Dubai
Principal	Raymond Niblock
Curriculum	SABIS
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	3,913
Number of Emirati students	246 (6%)
Date of the inspection	26th February to 1st March 2012

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The context of the school

The school opened in 1993. It had 3,913 students on roll at the time of the inspection, from Kindergarten to Grade 13, slightly more than last year's number of 3,742.

The majority of students learned Arabic as a first language. Arab students comprised by far the largest group, with significant numbers of Emirati, Indian, Pakistani, US, Iranian, Canadian and UK students. No students had been identified with a special educational need by the school. There were approximately 150 teachers, a teacher-student ratio of one teacher to twenty six students. Class sizes were often large. There had been a considerable turnover of Kindergarten teachers in the past year. Staffing was more settled elsewhere in the school. There were 35 classroom helpers.

The school followed the SABIS curriculum. This is a custom-made, prescriptive curriculum heavily focused on an academic education and university entrance. Provision was almost entirely through whole-class teaching. Under-achieving students attended weekend classes and/or summer school. Students were entered for external examinations of their choice. These included IGCSE, GCSE, AS & A-levels, AP and SAT tests. Not all students sat these examinations.

The Director had been in post for four years.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The International School of Choueifat was an acceptable school. Its promise to parents that every student would achieve a place at university was true for most of the children who stayed to Grade 12. Attainment in the majority of subjects was good in Grade 12. The school's methods of education were suitable for the oldest students to acquire a good enough knowledge and examination technique in a limited range of subjects. However, its methods of education were much less appropriate for younger students, especially the children in Kindergarten. At this level, the restricted range of subjects and activities in the curriculum did not allow students to develop their own individual skills, talents and creativity. The students were caring and responsible. They co-operated dutifully in lessons although many expressed concern about the

academic pressures they were under to succeed in examinations and tests. Their limited interaction with Dubai and the UAE culture, as well as with the wider community, restricted their awareness of the wider world community. Displays and activities were minimal.

The SABIS organisation ensured the continuity of the school's educational values but it did not allow the school freedom to innovate or develop. The recommendations from the previous inspection had not been addressed. The school remained non-compliant with the Ministry of Education curriculum requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic. It was the policy of the school to minimise parents' involvement in their children's learning and contact with teachers. The school did not take into account, or act on, views of stakeholders. The school functioned satisfactorily on a day to day basis but its evaluations of its own performance were inaccurate.

Key strengths

- Good attainment by older students in English, mathematics and science;
- Students' co-operative and tolerant attitudes and behaviour in lessons, their relationships with other students and their attendance;
- Efficient assessment systems that tracked students' performance in tests and identified students who needed extra work;
- Good procedures that ensured students' health and safety.

Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language through more effective teaching and learning, a more engaging and relevant curriculum, and a greater regard for local culture;
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and the curriculum in the Kindergarten so that they meet all the developmental needs of children for their age, and improve attainment and progress, especially in English and science
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and the curriculum in the other phases of the school;
- Ensure that enjoyment, practical experiences, critical thinking and creativity are intrinsic to students' learning experiences;
- Involve all key staff in the process of self-evaluation and consider judgements against accepted international practice in order to improve accuracy and produce action plans that will develop the school successfully;
- Meet statutory requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic and address the recommendations of the previous report.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	High
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

Attainment was much the same as it was last year across the school. In Kindergarten, attainment in mathematics had improved; children's abilities were appropriate for their age, although the breadth of their learning was limited. However, children's attainment in English remained weak because they did not have enough opportunities to develop their speaking and early writing skills. In other phases, attainment in Arabic as a first language was acceptable, although it was unsatisfactory as an additional language in

primary and middle phases. The majority of students could not communicate well orally, their listening was underdeveloped and they found it hard to express themselves in writing. Attainment in Islamic Education was unsatisfactory because students had very limited knowledge of the Hadeeth, the Tajweed rules and the Prophet's life. In English, students' listening skills were good; many spoke well but lacked confidence. Writing skills were acceptable in the primary and middle phases but restricted by a limited range of genres. However, in high school the majority could write clear, well-structured and detailed text on a wide variety of subjects. Attainment had improved in this phase. In mathematics, problem solving and critical thinking skills were underdeveloped especially in the primary phases. Older students were good in calculus and geometry. High school students performed well in external examinations in science. Younger students were confident in planning investigations and predicting outcomes, but they had not developed the necessary practical skills.

The school was unable to demonstrate the extent of students' progress. It collected much data but only charted successes or failures in tests and did not compare students with international expectations until the high school. Inspection evidence showed that the inappropriate teaching method in Kindergarten resulted in slow progress in English and in other aspects of learning, except mathematics. Elsewhere, students' progress matched their attainment. There were strengths in English, mathematics and science in the high school, and mathematics in the middle school. Students' progress generally was acceptable because, through constant repetition and practice, they acquired knowledge although not necessarily the skills to apply it well for themselves. Much of their progress was a result of help from more able students. However, the time that more able students spent helping others deprived them of opportunities to improve their own progress. The least able students made the best progress, except for students with specific needs whom the school did not identify. Progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language was weak.

Emirati students made very similar progress to that of other students. There was little evidence in lessons or in data to show any significant differences, except in Arabic. Here, they made better progress than other students because they had more confidence in speaking and reading.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable

Students' behaviour was generally good, especially in lessons. They were respectful of the school's code of conduct. Relationships between staff and students were usually positive. Students had good attitudes to work and complied readily in lessons with teachers' requests. Students understood the need to be healthy and what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, but did not all make wise choices at lunch-time. Attendance was good and students attended lessons punctually. Younger students had very limited awareness and understanding of the community and world around them. Their awareness of the significance of Islam in Dubai was below the expected levels and their knowledge and understanding of the local cultures and traditions were very limited. Only a minority of them had an appropriate awareness of local environmental issues. Older students had an acceptable knowledge of the local traditions, the role of Islam in Dubai and the diverse nature of its population. In most parts of the school, only a minority were given the opportunity to carry out simple duties and roles of responsibility; this was better in high school. Older students had clear awareness of some local economic and environmental challenges but could not give convincing and practical ideas about their possible present and future involvement in the solutions. Few students at any stage had made significant contributions towards their community outside school.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

The quality of teaching had not improved since the previous inspection. Most lessons observed were acceptable and a few were good. A significant minority were unsatisfactory across the school, although mainly in Kindergarten, Islamic Education and Arabic. The whole-class, undifferentiated method of teaching suited older students better and teachers' subject knowledge was more secure in the higher grades. Here, teaching was more effective, particularly in mathematics and science, because the majority of teachers questioned more purposefully and facilitated some effective problem-solving. Overall, though, there was a lack of understanding of how to promote understanding, critical thinking and independent learning skills, especially among younger students. Most teachers promoted knowledge of specific topics but provided limited opportunities to discuss them in depth. Few teachers catered skilfully for the needs of more able students. They did, however, provide better support for the less able by ensuring that as many as possible were able to pass tests.

Most learning was done by constant repetition, reinforcement and practice. Whole-class chanting of facts was not uncommon. Most students engaged positively with the classroom experiences, followed instructions and were anxious to please their teachers. Older students were more able to explain what they had learned. The most significant connections made in lessons related to how the knowledge gained would be useful in examinations; this favoured older students. Younger students had little scope to assume responsibilities for their own thinking and understanding. They rarely applied any knowledge gained to their own lives. Most students did not collaborate productively nor did they question for better understanding. Few students used information and communication technology effectively to support their learning.

A rigorous and comprehensive system of data gathering was in place. Regular tests assessed knowledge-based outcomes. The results were collated and used to re-teach a topic, if necessary. Almost all teachers checked for mastery of syllabus points in lessons and knew the scores students achieved. For older students, assessment supported continuous analysis of students' gains from examinations. While it did not examine for understanding and had an excessive focus on multiple-choice testing methodologies, it was effective in providing teachers and students with clear improvement options. The assessment of the outcomes for younger children, however, did not focus on a wide range of skills, understanding and age-appropriate developmental milestones. It measured how well children were able to repeat what they had been told. Assessment of Arabic as a first language in high school was limited because too many students took examinations designed for speakers of Arabic as an additional language. Across most grades and subject areas, the assessment system did not comprehensively measure students' performance against international expectations.

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

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

The curriculum in the Kindergarten lacked breadth and failed to give children a rounded learning experience. It did not provide enough opportunities for independent, practical, investigative work or enrichment. Elsewhere, the curriculum was regularly reviewed and had a clear rationale. It was not broad and balanced as it did not meet statutory requirements nor give sufficient time to art, music and physical education. Preparation for transition to university was a strength with well-focused support and visits by university representatives. The curriculum was well planned to meet the needs of less able students but provision for the more able, within the classroom, denied them sufficient opportunities to extend their subject knowledge. Extra-curricular activities included a range of sports, clubs and competitions. Enrichment activities and links with the community were limited. Support for developing independent learning, research and critical thinking skills was underdeveloped except in the high school. The school had made little progress in addressing the curriculum recommendations from the last inspection report concerning the quality of the curriculum in the Kindergarten or compliance with statutory requirements in Islamic Education and Arabic.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Arrangements for securing students' health and safety were good. There were clear procedures for moving about the school. The well-considered arrangements for traffic management and for exiting and boarding buses helped to ensure that students remained safe. The premises were very clean, and the grounds tidy and generally free of litter. At the time of the inspection, the concerns raised by some parents and students about the cleanliness of washrooms seemed unfounded. The same high standards should apply at all times throughout the year. Evacuation drills were regularly practised. Staff kept medicines securely, and administered them carefully as appropriate. The school's good policies on healthy living and eating were undermined by the unhealthy foods offered in the cafeteria and snack bar, which left students unclear about healthy living options. Staff were aware of procedures for child protection.

Support and guidance for students were acceptable. The relationships between staff and students were generally positive and staff knew of the academic attainment of their students. Students were aware of the consequences of unacceptable behaviour and attitudes, and the Student Life Prefects provided positive role models. Sound advice was provided for students in their choice of career, university and examination subjects but students were less clear about whom to approach with a personal issue. At the time of the inspection, the school had no policy of identifying students with a special educational need. Therefore, there was no specialist support for any student with a particular need. Systems in the school for promoting good attendance were effective.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Unsatisfactory
Partnerships with parents and the community	Unsatisfactory
Governance	Unsatisfactory
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

Senior leaders were dedicated to high standards in terms of examination success. They were less dedicated to a more rounded development of students. They provided a clear direction and promoted a vision to which all staff, students and parents had to adhere. However, the leadership team within the school had no influence on the direction of the school's development or its philosophy. Leadership was strongly delegated and most key staff showed commitment to the school's aims. Communication was efficient at all levels of leadership. Staff knew exactly what was required of them, as did students; guidelines were explicit and stringent. The focus on the examinations for senior students was the highest priority, even though not all students took them.

The school did not have an effective self-evaluation process based on a realistic understanding of its provision in comparison with international practice. Leaders believed all aspects of its operation to be outstanding but did not give supporting reasons for them. The school's judgements conflicted significantly with those of the inspection findings. Too few stakeholders in the school were involved in the self-evaluation process. Self-evaluation was regarded as the responsibility of the SABIS organization. There was no effective action plan for improvement based on identified weaknesses or recommendations from the last inspection report. There had been little improvement to the school in the past year.

The school did not engage in close links with parents. Parents were encouraged to enable students to work at home but their involvement in their children's learning was not sought. Parents received termly reports and had access to regular test results but were not allowed to discuss their children's progress with the relevant teachers. All communication was with Academic Quality Controllers who, the school believed, had a better knowledge of the students than teachers. Nevertheless, there were only six Academic Quality Controllers for almost 4,000 students. Parents had no voice in the development of the school. There were few effective links with the local community.

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي
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Governance was unsatisfactory. There was no governing or advisory body. The SABIS administrators held the school to account and gave it little freedom to develop in its own individual way. The school was not accountable to the parents for its performance or for the quality of education experienced by the students. The school did not involve any stakeholders in its development, except the SABIS organisation. The school had not responded to any of the recommendations from the last report. It still did not fulfil the statutory requirements of the Ministry of Education in ensuring sufficient time for the teaching of Islamic Education and Arabic, and the required class size maximums. Some classes had up to 43 students.

The school ran satisfactorily on a day-to-day basis. Arrival and dismissal times were adequate and students' movement between lessons was well managed. Some teachers were suitably qualified as teachers and in their subjects, especially in mathematics; however, most were not suitably qualified, especially in Kindergarten and primary. Staff training was regular but focused on enabling teachers to facilitate the curriculum more than developing teaching skills. The premises were large and adequate for the number of students, although space in classrooms was often tight because of the large numbers of students. The two prayer rooms were extremely small and dirty. Resources were limited. Most lessons relied solely on textbooks and blackboards; there were no interactive whiteboards to enhance and illustrate learning. The library was under-stocked and had very few books for Islamic Education and Arabic. Students' use of computers and other technology was 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	165	7%
	Last year	420	9%
Teachers	5		3%
Students	22		4%

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

Only a small proportion of parents, students and teachers responded to the surveys. A few parents praised the school's strong focus on academic achievement and the strict discipline. Overall, however, almost all the responses and comments were negative. Parents, teachers and students raised concerns about the stress that students were under because of long school days, additional work outside lessons and the constant taking of tests. Concern was also expressed about the limited content of the curriculum, including the provision for Islamic Education and Arabic, and the cleanliness and hygiene of the school. Students thought that behaviour was not good enough. They said that they did not enjoy their learning. They considered that their views and suggestions were not listened to, that they were treated unfairly and they did not feel that they could confide in an adult. Parents were unhappy with the poor communication with the school and teachers commented that parents were not involved enough.

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.

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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

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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