

INSPECTION REPORT

The International School of Choueifat

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The International School of Choueifat

Location	Al Sufouh
Type of school	Private
Website	www.iscdxb-sabis.net
Telephone	04-3999444
Address	P.O. Box 21935-Dubai Road 331 , Al Sufouh 2
Principal	Mr. Hisham Hassan (School Director)
Curriculum	SABIS
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten 1-Grade 13
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	3968
Largest nationality group of Students	Arab
Number of Emirati students	287 (7%)
Date of the inspection	2nd to 6th March 2014

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The context of the school

The International School of Choueifat, a part of the SABIS Group, is situated in the Al Sufouh district of Dubai. Students were grouped in 123 classes from Kindergarten to the high school phase; 53 of the classes were in the elementary phase. At the time of the inspection, the school roll was 3968 students; 607 students had been registered in the current school year. A majority of students were of Arab nationality and approximately seven per cent were Emiratis. No students had been identified by the school as having any form of special educational need.

The SABIS school curriculum included frequent testing. Students had a choice of taking external examinations which were US and UK based. For example IGCSE, AS and A-levels were based upon the National Curriculum of England; AP and SAT tests were of US origin.

There were 153 teachers; a small minority held a recognised teaching qualification. They were supported by a team of 31 teaching assistants, mainly in the younger students' classrooms. Approximately 20 per cent of teachers were newly appointed since the last inspection.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Good attainment and progress in high school English, mathematics and science;
- Students' positive behaviour, self-assurance and good manners;
- Good systems for ensuring students' health and safety;
- Students' support for one another within and outside the school community.

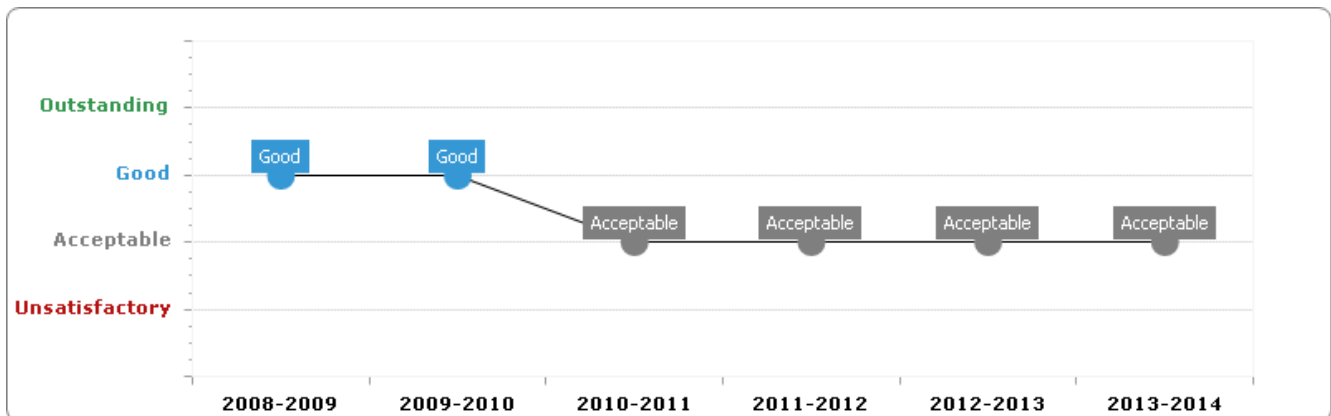
Recommendations

- After more than three years of persistently failing to do so, ensure the school is compliant with Ministry of Education (MoE) requirements for
 - Islamic Education for non-Arab Muslims across the school and Grade 1 to 3 Arab Muslims
 - Arabic as an Additional Language;
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning establishing a shared awareness and implementation of quality practice in the Kindergarten and elementary phase;
- Use assessment data to, inform teaching, modify the curriculum to meet the needs of all students, and improve attainment and progress across all key subjects;
- Use externally validated assessments to moderate the school's own assessments and to give staff, the students and their parents, a realistic view of students' attainment in an international context.
- Develop systems for identifying and supporting students with special educational needs, including gifted and talented;
- Use the DSIB inspection criteria for school's self-evaluation and use the information to improve the school.

Progress since the last inspection

- Assessment systems had been enhanced;
- There had been improvements to the student lockers and the staff rest room;
- There had been no improvements in the standards of attainment and progress in the key subjects;
- There had been no progress against the recommendations of the last inspection report, notably the school's persistent failure to address the issue of non-compliance with KHDA requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic.

Trend of overall performance



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

	KG	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	Unsatisfactory
Progress	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Quality of students' learning skills	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Community and environmental responsibility	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Primary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Students' attainment in Islamic Education was unsatisfactory across the school. Arab-Muslim students attained levels slightly better than their non-Arab peers. Students in lower elementary could name the five prayers. Across the school, students' knowledge and understanding of Islamic concepts and practice were very limited. In Arabic as a first language, attainment was acceptable in all phases. Most students had appropriate language skills. Students could follow teachers' instructions and completed tasks appropriately in accordance with the instructions given. Attainment was unsatisfactory in all phases in Arabic as an additional language. The majority of students had limited language skills, for example responding to very simple questions. English attainment was good in the high school and acceptable across all other phases. Reading, speaking and listening skills generally matched age-related expectations. There was a gap between students' writing and other skills, which remained as students moved through the school. Attainment in mathematics was good in the middle and high school and acceptable lower in the school. Students knew how to solve some problems by applying a learned technique but they did not always have a good understanding of the relevant mathematical concepts. Students used mathematical language correctly at each phase and had strong number skills. In the middle and high school phases students had developed strong algebraic skills. In science, students in Grades 2 to 9 demonstrated acceptable levels of theoretical knowledge in their classes. Older students experienced some investigative challenges and their external examination results indicated good achievement against international benchmarks. Attainment in science in Kindergarten was unsatisfactory.

Students' progress in Islamic Education was unsatisfactory across all phases. They did not develop their knowledge and understanding to the expected standard in key Islamic concepts and practices such as Hajj and Zakat. In Arabic as the first language, progress in listening, speaking and reading was acceptable but slower in extended writing. Progress was unsatisfactory in all aspects of Arabic as an additional language. Progress was good in high school English and acceptable across all other phases. Students quickly developed and steadily improved an acceptable range of speaking, listening and reading skills. Progress in writing was slower because students did not have enough opportunities to write at length. In mathematics, students made better progress after Kindergarten in their use of mathematical language and their knowledge of number facts. Their algebraic skills developed well as they were consistently emphasised in the school's programme. In science, progress in the Kindergarten was unsatisfactory. Students in the primary and middle school phases made acceptable progress in classroom discussions and reviews of new concepts presented. High school students made good progress and were able to discuss new material and developed their understanding of the scientific process, especially in practical work in the science laboratories.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Learning skills were unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and primary and acceptable in middle and high school phases. In the early stages, children too often merely chanted sentences and number facts. Throughout the school, students had positive attitudes to learning. In some art classes for example, they enjoyed learning and achieved high standards. When given the opportunity, students could explain their work well to their peers but they often found it difficult to show that they could apply their learning. High school science students collaborated well when carrying out practical work, but students had few opportunities to develop these useful skills in other subjects. Students did not demonstrate investigation skills and they did not use information and communication technology (ICT) to develop their learning across the curriculum. Apart from the high school phase, students did not demonstrate critical thinking skills.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Personal responsibility was outstanding in the high school and good at all other phases. The students showed responsible attitudes and behaviour. They demonstrated respectful relationships and positive attitudes to healthy living. Students in the lower phases were exposed to good role models from the higher phases and this helped them to understand their roles and responsibilities better. In the high school, students developed strong leadership qualities. Prefects were self-disciplined and their commitment to their peers and the school was commendable. This was reflected in the student-led projects and schemes.

Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and acceptable elsewhere in the school. Students in Kindergarten had limited knowledge of the UAE context. Older students reflected appropriately on the Islamic nature of the UAE and Dubai. Students' knowledge of the local culture was superficial; they could describe some of its features such as the desert and fishing, and they could recall the National Anthem. Most students had adequate knowledge of their own cultures but their knowledge of other cultures was less well developed.

Community and environmental responsibility was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten, acceptable in primary and middle phases, and good in the high school. Almost all students demonstrated a good work ethic. They were keen to take responsibility and carry out any duties they were given with enthusiasm. They contributed well to the school community. When given the opportunity, students demonstrated they were

able to take the initiative. Older students had a good understanding of environmental issues. However, there were very few opportunities for children in the Kindergarten to develop an understanding of the natural world.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten and primary phase and acceptable in middle and high school phases. It was notably weaker in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language. The majority of teachers had adequate subject knowledge and knew how to teach the subject in line with the school's approach. A significant minority, especially in Kindergarten, did not take account of how children learn and develop. Teachers emphasised the acquisition of facts and how to pass examinations. Lessons lacked variety. Teachers relied too much on textbooks as the main learning resource. They followed the predetermined pace of lessons with a view to helping all students achieve the lesson objectives. This approach did not meet the needs of the higher or lower attaining students. Students' critical thinking skills were under-developed and opportunities were frequently missed to capitalise on their responses to questions.

Assessment was acceptable in the Kindergarten and good in all other phases of the school. Assessment systems had been further enhanced since the last inspection. The extensive information gained from the analysis of internal and external tests was highly effective in pin pointing gaps in students' learning. In the elementary, middle and high school phases this information was shared with parents and students and used to provide additional classes for students who had not reached the pass mark. Test data was shared with class teachers and this ensured that they were aware of the different attainment levels of students in their class. However, this information was not used to adjust the curriculum to help all students reach their potential. Teachers' questioning of students as a means of assessment was not effective. Questions were mainly focused on factual recall and did not assess students' deeper understanding. Students did not routinely have opportunities to assess their own work. Marking of students' work did not include written feedback and, although verbal feedback in lessons praised effort, it did not provide students with further guidance to improve their rate of progress.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school curriculum's ability to meet the educational needs of all students was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and acceptable across the other phases. The curriculum had a clear rationale, was sequential and offered a continuum of courses supporting transitions through all phases. Students' progress and curriculum objectives were reviewed weekly but modification of the curriculum was made only on a yearly basis. In Kindergarten, the curriculum offered insufficient opportunities for young children to enhance their learning and explore their environment through hands-on experiences. Cross-curricular links and sufficient opportunities for independent learning and critical thinking were extremely limited throughout the elementary and middle phases. The school was non-compliant with Ministry of Education requirements for Islamic Education for Muslim Non-Arabs and Arabic as an additional language. In the high school, opportunities existed for students to vary their learning styles through some independent work and the use of science laboratories. After-school activities enabled students to apply some of their learning in a wider context. The quality of the arts and music programmes expanded creative opportunities for students in the elementary and middle phases.

The design of the curriculum to meet individual needs of students was unsatisfactory everywhere except High School where it was acceptable. The curriculum lacked stimulating learning opportunities for students of all abilities and learning styles. For example, in Kindergarten there was no focus on personal development or planned outdoor experiential opportunities. The SABIS regime tightly controlled any flexibility and innovation in the planning of lessons and the teachers' delivery of the curriculum. There were some curricular choices which existed at the high school phase and these provided chances for gifted and talented students to use critical thinking and independent research skills.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were good. The school provided a safe and secure learning environment. The premises were clean and well-maintained. Although the vast majority of students showed a high level of respect for their environment, the litter in the playgrounds after break times showed that a few did not. Staff were updated on child protection arrangements and made aware of any student's medical needs. All medicines were stored safely and administered responsibly by the medical staff. Detailed records of fire drills and other statutory safety requirements were maintained. Students displayed a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and the cafeteria provided suitably healthy food choices. Bus safety arrangements were stringently followed. The school was working

closely with the appropriate authorities to improve the flow of traffic at the start and end of the school day.

The quality of support was acceptable. Staff-student relationships were good. Behaviour was managed well and outstanding levels of attendance were promoted by effective systems. However, a few students were not always punctual to school or in their attendance to lessons. The school did not operate an inclusive admissions policy and systems to identify the needs of students with special educational needs (SEN) were unsatisfactory. There was no targeted support for these students and therefore they were not enabled to overcome their particular barriers to learning. As a result, they often struggled to make progress. Students with special gifts and talents were not well supported. School staff were generally supportive of the personal needs of students and a small but dedicated pastoral team helped students to develop their own ways of supporting and guiding each other which were often creative and appropriate. There were some catch up lessons for students who had missed some learning but these did not address any form of additional learning need.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. The school's leaders had a clear view of the school's direction and of its philosophy but they had almost no influence in terms of developing and improving the broader SABIS vision for education. The vision and ethos was shared with staff and other stakeholders through the school's website and corporate literature, induction training, guidance and monitoring. Senior leaders continually articulated an over-riding commitment to examination success, particularly in the middle and high school. Effective delegation and efficient communication between the levels of leadership ensured that almost all staff were aware of their accountabilities. The Deputy Directors had a visible presence around school and enjoyed conversing with students of all ages at break times. Due to the unwillingness of the owners to accept the need to develop a more rounded education for all students, the school leaders' capacity to manage change was very limited. Leaders showed complacency in addressing the wide range of issues raised in the previous report. No progress had been made in implementing any of the recommendations.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. Lesson observations fell primarily to the Academic Quality Coordinators. The lack of robustness of the school's in-house observation procedures inhibited deeper analysis of teachers' performance. Staff received feedback but had little input into the school's self-evaluation process. Other than activities linked to students' assessment and examinations, the range of self-evaluation processes to gather information was limited and did not make use of national

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inspection criteria. Improvement planning lacked an evaluative rigour and was mainly descriptive. It did not clearly indicate targets for the school's improvement. Any success criteria and measures used were vague. There was an insufficient focus on measurable actions which would impact upon the learning experience for all age groups.

The quality of partnerships with parents and the community was unsatisfactory. There were effective communication links with the parents but parents were not encouraged to be active partners in their children's learning in school, for example by helping in the classroom. Parents' access to class teachers was strongly discouraged. There was no parents' council.

Governance was unsatisfactory. There was no governing or advisory body. The governance function fell to the SABIS Regional Director and SABIS senior leaders. The organisation held the school to account but their system inhibited school leaders' capacity to make improvements, for example to the teaching styles in Kindergarten. Governance lacked any representation from other stakeholders. The need to fulfil all statutory requirements continued to be ignored.

Management including staffing and resources was acceptable. The school ran smoothly and there were appropriate procedures and policies. Almost all teachers had degree level qualifications, but few had teaching qualifications. Professional development of teachers focused more on delivering a set programme in a uniform way than on students' learning. There were enough teaching areas and specialist rooms to accommodate the school population. However, there were insufficient prayer rooms to meet the needs of the Muslim students. Each area of the school had suitable resources.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students generally had better attainment levels than their peers in Islamic Education. For example, they demonstrated acceptable recitation and memorisation skills, could recall short verses from Holy Qur'an and had an adequate knowledge of prayer and daily Muslim practices. Emirati students benefitted from good home support. Attainment in reading was acceptable and most Emirati students could read and understand text at the age-appropriate levels. Mathematics attainment was in line with other students but they had few estimation strategies to predict or check the reasonableness of answers. Attainment in science, where taught, was acceptable and improved in older age groups as a result of more practical opportunities. Overall, acceptable progress was achieved over time in English and mathematics. In Kindergarten, the development of science skills and understanding was unsatisfactory because Emirati children rarely participated in hands-on learning activities leading to progress. The majority of students had positive attitudes to their studies, were well-behaved, and engaged fully in activities with their peers.

Behaviour only deteriorated in classes that were poorly taught. Emirati students engaged fully in the available extra-curricular activities, including sporting events. The curriculum made limited references to cultural and heritage issues, for example mosques, landmarks, customs, national celebrations. The career advice available to Emirati students was acceptable and the school made provision for supporting them in their preparation for final transition to post-school employment or study.

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

The quality of the school's provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) was unsatisfactory. The school's admissions policy and practice did not match. The school did not promote the inclusion of students with SEN. Although the school claimed not to have any students with SEN on roll, the inspectors did not agree. The school had complex testing mechanisms to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the knowledge of all students. The resultant data indicated that a significant minority of students struggled in a number of subjects. Although students had access to special re-teaching sessions, a lack teachers with specialist qualifications, knowledge and experience resulted in a poor match between the focus of support and the difficulties experienced by students. Consequently students with SEN often experienced repeated failure.

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

Teachers of Arabic as a first language had adequate subject knowledge and established positive relationships with their students. The teachers' priority was examination success. Lessons focussed too much on knowledge acquisition tasks to enable students to pass exams. Little attention was given to the learning process and to developing language skills. Teachers knew how well students had performed in tests and taught students how to use examination techniques to improve their scores. Limited use was made of resources to engage students and deepen their understanding. Teaching strategies were suitable for the average students in all stages but lacked variety to suit the different learning styles.

The curriculum was based on a clear rationale and values but did not meet all students' learning needs. The curriculum was too strictly driven by the course textbooks. Visits and other activities focussed around Arabic language. Cultural themes were organised but did not always effectively integrate with the lesson-based learning experiences. Opportunities for developing creative writing skills 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	414	18%
	Last year	284	13%
Teachers	78		52%
Students	66		11%

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

Only a small proportion of parents and students responded to the survey. Most of the parents and students who responded thought that the school provided a good quality of education and that progress was good in English, mathematics and science. About half of the teachers responded to the survey. Almost all had positive views of the school and considered that it was well led and managed. However, the majority of parents continued to be concerned about the lack of communication between themselves and the school, particularly the lack of direct contact with class teachers with regard to their children's attainment and progress. Only a minority of parents were aware of the school's performance in international assessments. The majority of students did not agree that, as either a Muslim or non-Muslim, the school made sure they had a good understanding of Islam or Islamic values.

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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