

INSPECTION REPORT

Horizon English School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Horizon English School

Location	Al Wasl
Type of school	Private
Website	www.horizonschooldubai.com
Telephone	04-3422891
Address	Dubai - Al Wasl - Jumeirah-P.O.BOX: 6749
Principal	Marion C. Sinclair
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-11/ FS to Year 6
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	498
Largest nationality group of Students	UK
Number of Emirati students	4
Date of the inspection	21st October to 23rd October

Contents

The context of the school	3
Overall school performance 2013-2014	4
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
Progress since the last inspection	5
Trend of overall performance.....	5
How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?	6
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are teaching and assessment?.....	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	14
There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school	15
What happens next?	16
How to contact us	16

The context of the school

Located in Al Wasl, Horizon English School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Year 6, aged three to 11 years. At the time of inspection there were 498 students on roll.

The school followed the English National Curriculum. There were 33 full-time teachers, including the Principal, Vice-Principal and Assistant Principal. Almost all teachers had appropriate qualifications. They were supported by nine teaching assistants and an information communication coordinator. There were four Foundation Stage classes, one class for Foundation Stage 1 and three classes at Foundation Stage 2. At Foundation Stage the number of children in each class varied from 23 to 26 and each class had a full-time teaching assistant. There were three classes in each year group from Year 1 to Year 5 and two classes at Year 6. The number of students in each primary class varied from 19 to 26.

Forty-three different nationalities were represented among the student population, with 41% coming from the United Kingdom and 12% from Australia. There were four Emirati students. The Head teacher had been in post for 15 years. Eight new teachers had joined the school during the current academic session.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Outstanding

Key strengths

- The outstanding progress in learning made by children in the Foundation Stage and the good overall attainment and progress of students in the primary years;
- Students' personal and social development, their excellent behaviour and work ethic, and the warm and purposeful staff-student relationships;
- The outstanding development of students' learning skills, highly effective assessment procedures, and a well-planned curriculum that provided rich learning experiences;
- The commitment of senior leaders and School Board members to fostering shared responsibility and seeking continuous improvement, based on strong self-evaluation.

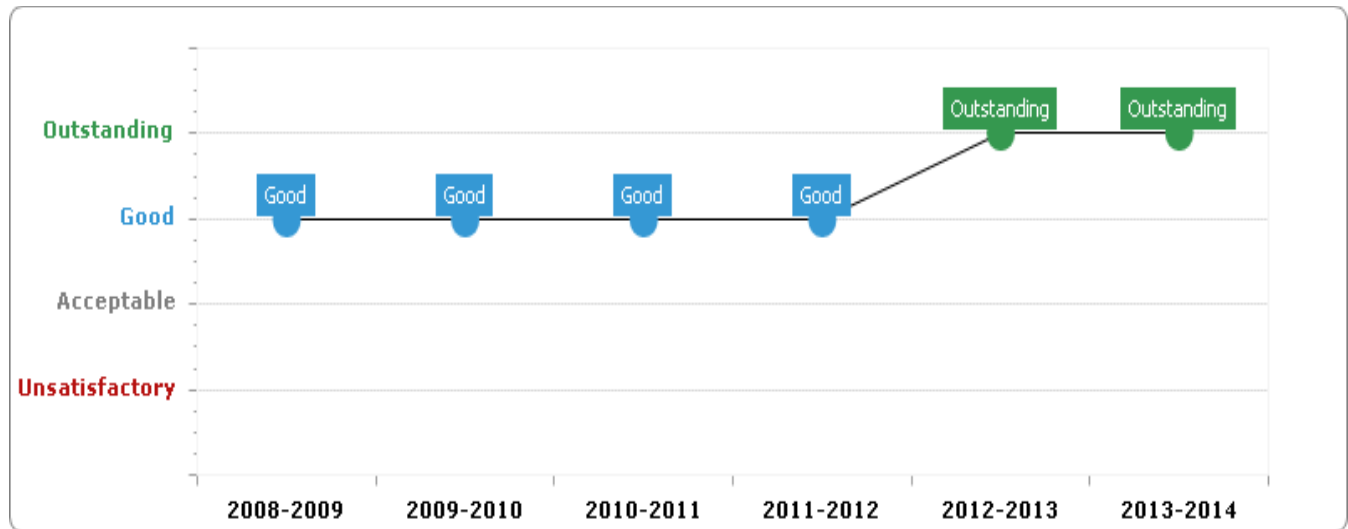
Recommendations

- Ensure the very good quality of teaching, particularly high teacher expectations and a brisk pace of lessons, is consistent across the school;
- Provide regular and well-planned opportunities to develop students' speaking skills in Arabic, and continue to improve students' progress in Islamic Education by challenging them sufficiently, particularly in developing their recitation skills;
- Review the school's homework policy to enhance parents' ability to support their children's learning.

Progress since the last inspection

- Good and productive steps taken to enable the Islamic Education and Arabic departments to work closely with other key subject departments to create engaging lessons that students now experienced in Arabic as an additional language;
- The introduction of 'challenge' lessons which had supported the development of students as independent learners and improved their achievements;
- The increased use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning in the Foundation Stage and the primary years;
- Improvements to the already good quality provision for students with special educational needs;
- The more effective roles of middle leaders in improving teaching and learning;
- Improved oral and written feedback by teachers to students;
- An enhanced School Board which represented the interests of stakeholders, including parents, and which effectively held the school to account for its work.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Quality of students' learning skills	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Good	Not Applicable
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Outstanding	Good	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language. In Islamic education, most students in lower primary years were able to list and name the five daily prayers and the five pillars of Islam. They could talk briefly about each pillar. Across the school, most students displayed understanding of Islamic values in line with curriculum expectations. Recitation and memorization skills of the Holy Qur'an were less well developed. In Arabic as additional language, listening was acceptable as the majority of students understood and responded appropriately and accurately to teachers' instructions and questions. The quality of speaking skills across the school was not consistent and was weakest for those who had been studying the subject for more than two years. Reading skills were secure and writing was in line with curriculum expectations although students did not always use what they had learned in a wider range of contexts. Attainment in the key subjects at Foundation Stages was outstanding. In the primary phase it was also outstanding in mathematics and good in English and science. In English, at Foundation Stage, most children listened well, responded to instructions and wrote simple sentences using correct letter sounds. In primary classes, most students could read texts with good understanding and write imaginatively in different styles. In mathematics, at Foundation Stage, almost all children attained high standards and used their skills confidently in their play activities. Most primary students also attained above expected standards. They applied their knowledge of number, measure and shape in real-life situations. More able students were skilled when working on equivalence in fractions, decimals and percentages. In science in the Foundation Stage children developed their investigative skills well.

In Islamic Education, most students made acceptable progress in gaining new knowledge in Islamic concepts and values. A majority were beginning to make appropriate links with their daily practices. In Arabic as an additional language, students made good progress in improving their Arabic language skills. Most students made significant progress in learning new vocabulary and a majority could use what they had learned to construct sentences and express ideas in a familiar context. Speaking in Arabic, was the least developed skill. In English, at Foundation Stage, children made excellent progress in speaking, listening, reading and writing. In the primary years, almost all students made good progress and were confident speakers, readers and writers who expressed their opinions clearly. However, the good and sometimes outstanding progress in writing was not consistently observed across all year groups. In mathematics, children had made outstanding progress at Foundation Stage and had gained a sound understanding of early number work, weighing and measuring. In primary, progress was good overall with a quicker pace in Year 1 and Year 2 and in Year 6. Lack of sufficient challenge in lessons had slowed the pace of learning across the middle primary years. Progress in science at the Foundation Stage was outstanding. In the primary phase, where students needed more time to apply and develop their scientific skills, progress was good.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning was outstanding across the school. Students' engagement in and responsibility for their own learning was outstanding, particularly in Foundation Stage. Children were articulate and confident about what they were learning and could work independently. Across the school, students' interactions and collaboration were highly developed. Students of all ages worked co-operatively with their peers and were well organised when in groups. Most students had a growing awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses and could talk about what they had learned and could reflect on their achievements. In all subjects, learning was always meaningful because students were able to relate their learning to experiences within their own lives. They confidently applied their learning to problems. In a number of lessons, students worked with independence and improved their critical thinking skills through questioning and evaluation of what they were learning.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal and social development was outstanding. Students' attitudes and behaviour throughout the school were exemplary. Their participation in the Student Council, as electors or elected, promoted mature and responsible attitudes and behaviour at a young age. Children in the Foundation Stage and in primary demonstrated a high level of maturity and sense of personal responsibility. They were self-disciplined and showed care and compassion for each other as part of a wider 'family'. They knew the golden rules of the school and applied these effectively. They enjoyed coming to school and this was reflected in the very high levels of attendance. Almost all students showed a high level of personal confidence and enjoyed excellent relationships with each other and with staff. They paid due regard to healthy eating which was also encouraged around the school. Students could talk knowledgeably about what they needed to do to enjoy a healthy lifestyle.

Students demonstrated strong understanding and appreciation of Islam. Most students appreciated and celebrated the local heritage and Emirati identity through a good range of activities and displays. They valued and celebrated most of the events in Dubai and its cultural heritage. Students fully appreciated and celebrated their own culture. They demonstrated a mature understanding of cultural diversity. They showed respect for each other's cultural differences.

Students had an outstanding sense of community and environmental awareness. They took on a wide range of responsibilities, including acting as class helpers, house captains and prefects. They were provided with good opportunities to influence school life, for example through the Student Council and by

talking to the Board. Students demonstrated an excellent work ethic. Many created well researched and carefully presented personal projects. They had a good understanding of the actions required to conserve the environment and were active in maintaining a clean and litter-free school campus. They contributed to sustainability by recycling paper.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was outstanding in Foundation Stage and good in the primary phase of the school. Teachers and classroom support staff had a very good understanding of how students learn. Lesson planning followed a common format and teachers used it flexibly. Individual changes to plans took place before and during lessons, based on continual assessments of students' needs. In the Foundation Stage, there was a good balance between activities where children could make choices, and those where they were led by adults. Teachers ensured that even the youngest of children used computer tablets with confidence. The use of conversation to develop learning was a very strong feature of the school in most subjects, with students being taught how to ask and answer questions. Students were often given time to reflect before answering questions which helped develop higher levels of thinking. Students of all abilities were supported by their peers and developed confidence when taking part in carefully planned activities. However some students missed the opportunity to work within groups because of the amount of time they were withdrawn from the classes for extra support. Occasionally the pace of learning slowed in some lessons because teachers did not challenge students sufficiently. Students benefited from very good specialist teaching in music, physical education, information and communication technology (ICT).

Assessment was outstanding across both phases of the school. Summative assessments were used consistently. Teacher assessments were used as the main indicator of progress in key subjects but the testing of Arabic needed more consolidation. Formative assessment was an integral part of teaching styles. Many lessons had starter activities which were used effectively for self-assessment against lesson objectives. The end of lesson activities were used to assess progress during the lesson and guided the teacher in the planning of future lessons. Teachers understood the strengths and weaknesses of their students exceptionally well. Students were involved in target setting and took pride in monitoring the progress that they made.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was outstanding. Across the school, the richness of experiences enthused and engaged students. In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum provided high quality inter-disciplinary opportunities for purposeful and independent learning through play. The highly effective organisation and planning of activities ensured children were fully engaged and excited about their learning. Primary class programmes of study had a clear rationale and were delivered very well against the stated objectives. These were carefully planned to ensure progression and coverage of experience across year groups and stages. ICT was well embedded in learning activities and offered relevant cross-curricular links. Transitions from Foundation Stage to primary classes were carefully managed to ensure children made a smooth transfer in personal, social and learning development. The curriculum was reviewed and improved regularly. Successful improvements had been made to Arabic programmes and involved students in more active learning in relevant contexts. The wide range of interesting extra-curricular activities offered across Year 1 to Year 6 enhanced students' learning experiences further and allowed them to use skills in different contexts.

Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students was outstanding at Foundation Stage and good in primary. At Foundation Stage, the curriculum was very well and innovatively modified to meet all children's needs and styles of learning. Choice for students was evident across the school. Enhanced modification of the curriculum through 'Free Flow' opportunities provided additional independence and choice to meet their interests. Inconsistency of curriculum approaches in middle primary stages had slowed the pace and challenge at times. A few aspects of Islamic Education, such as recitation, did not always have sufficient focus. In Arabic there, were fewer opportunities for challenge, particularly for more able students.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements to ensure the health and wellbeing of students were outstanding. The school environment was safe, clean, attractive, well-resourced and highly conducive to learning. Facilities and buildings were well maintained and accessible to all. Health, safety and security procedures were very effective and children felt safe and well-protected. Considerable care was taken when students went on educational visits. Excellent medical care was provided by school medical staff who, along with teachers, effectively promoted healthy eating and lifestyles. Arrangements for child protection were well established and understood by all teachers. Students were carefully supervised at all times.

Support provided to students was outstanding. The high quality of care and support for students and their families was a significant feature of the school. Staff relationships with students were exceptional. These were warm, courteous, caring and considerate. Staff systematically and effectively monitored the personal and academic progress of students and provided excellent individual support and guidance. The school was successful in promoting outstanding attendance and punctuality.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership of the school was outstanding. The Head teacher and the seven other members of her senior leadership team provided strong direction and support to staff. Leadership was widely distributed which empowered individuals and teams. Middle leaders played important roles in promoting effective teaching and learning, notably at Foundation Stage and at the early and later primary stages. Relationships and communication at all levels were harmonious and purposeful. The high level of professional competence and commitment of all staff ensured the school's capacity to continue to build upon already outstanding provision.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were outstanding. All staff were involved in a regular and rigorous analysis of the work of the school. As a consequence, they knew well the school's strengths and those aspects requiring improvement. Clear action plans were in place to address identified shortcomings. However, leaders' observations of lessons in classrooms were not focussed consistently enough on the impact of teaching on learning outcomes. Good progress had been made in addressing the last inspection report's recommendations, particularly in improving students' learning experiences in Arabic as an additional language.

The school had established outstanding relationships with parents and with the local and wider community. The recently established 'Friends of Horizon', was working well and involved more parents in supporting the work of the school, including fund-raising and promoting social and community links. Following a parents' workshop, many parents provided valuable voluntary assistance to class teachers. The school's open-door policy provided good informal contact opportunities for parents and teachers. The 'SOS diary', school website, 'class mums', twice-yearly parent-teacher meetings and student progress reports kept parents suitably informed. Parents often accompanied students on visits, such as to the Heritage Centre, to learn about Dubai.

Students were aware of the needs of others through charitable giving and events, including supporting workers in labour camps, those with special needs and a project in Sri Lanka.

Governance of the school had improved and was now outstanding. The School Board, included directors representing the owners, elected parents, and community and staff representatives. It provided good support and resources for staff, had high ambitions for the work of the school and knew the standards it wished the school to achieve and maintain. They now held the school to good account. Commendably, Student Council representatives had recently addressed the Board to share their school improvement agenda.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was outstanding. Day-to-day management of the school was highly efficient. Staff were suitably qualified and many were experienced. Ancillary staff made a significant contribution to the work of the school. The school campus was excellent and provided a very good teaching and learning environment. Students' work was displayed to good effect. The grassed sports field, swimming pools, general purpose hall and spaces, and an excellent library were used effectively. Resources were of a high quality, including impressive and increasing ICT equipment.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students with special educational needs were welcomed to the school's inclusive environment. Comprehensive and well-established arrangements helped teachers to identify systematically the needs of students requiring learning enhancement or support for learning English as an additional language. All students with special educational needs had detailed educational plans. Relevant aspects regarding each student were agreed with parents and shared with his or her teachers. The Learning Enhancement staff worked closely with subject teachers to ensure effective provision for all students to access the curriculum. Most teachers tailored their lessons to provide differentiated activities that met the needs of all learners. As a result of the integrated and highly effective support, almost all students made outstanding progress academically, socially and personally. Positive links with a range of outside agencies ensured that students needing specific support received it during the school day or at other times. When students were withdrawn from lessons, for example to learn English as an additional language, they made very good progress as a result of the effective support given individually or in very small groups. Students felt secure, confident and valued and they were guided well. Overall, students with special needs including those who are gifted or talented, made excellent progress.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents and teachers 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	114	34%
	Last year	60	17%
Teachers	20		63%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

Only a small minority of parents responded to the survey. All said that their children enjoyed school and were safe and well looked after at school. Almost all felt that the school was led well and said they were satisfied with the quality of education the school provided. Almost all said their children were making good progress in English and most said this for mathematics and science. A significant minority of the parents who responded to the survey wanted the school's homework policy revised and students' progress reports to be more regular. They also wished that school leaders listened more to their opinions and that meetings with teachers were more regular and helpful. All parents agreed students were well behaved in school and that any incidents of bullying were dealt with well. All felt that the school was well led. They thought that students with special educational needs were fully integrated into the school. All thought that the school supported their own continuous professional development well and that the school provided students with a good quality of education. Almost all said that inspection had led to improvements in the school. There are no student responses as they are not of an appropriate age for the survey in this school.

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

Copyright © 2014

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school.

It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.