

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Al Mawakeb School - Al Barsha

Report published in April 2013

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Mawakeb School - Al Barsha

Location	Al Barsha
Type of school	Private
Website	www.almawakeb.sch.ae
Telephone	04-347-8288
Address	PO Box 35001, Dubai
Principal	Naziha Nasr
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	2,646
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	698 (26%)
Date of the inspection	24th to 28th February 2013

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## The context of the school

This campus of Al Mawakeb School is situated in Al Barsha. It had a cosmopolitan school population, with 66 nationalities represented. Most students were from Arab countries. Twenty six per cent of the students were Emiratis. Jordanians accounted for roughly 13 per cent, Egyptians for 10 and Lebanese for nine per cent.

The school offered a modified US curriculum. In the Kindergarten, children were taught through the medium of French. They also learned Arabic and English. The school had identified 131 students as having special educational needs, 94 of whom were included for medical reasons. Provision for the remaining 37 included a certified counsellor.

At the time of the inspection, 34 teachers, or 24 per cent, had been appointed since September 2012. Almost all teachers had a first degree or an appropriate academic qualification. Twenty eight per cent held a teaching qualification. Almost three quarters had no professional training for teaching.

## Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

### Key strengths

- The good attitudes and behaviour of almost all students throughout the school;
- The tri-lingual programme in the Kindergarten which led to good progress in the development of children's literacy;
- The arrangements for the health and safety of students throughout the school.

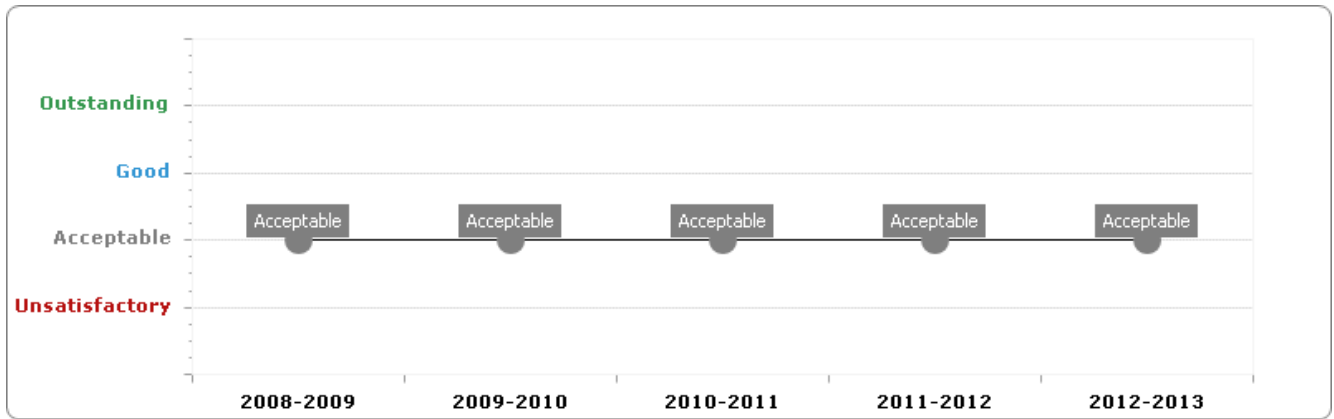
### Recommendations

- Improve students' attainment and progress in the key subjects by ensuring a balance of knowledge, skills and understanding;
- Ensure that teachers in all phases understand and practice basic principles of good teaching and classroom management;
- Improve the key aspects of leadership and management to advance and develop the quality of teaching and learning;
- Ensure that the school complies with the Ministry of Education statutory requirements with regard to the provision of Arabic as a first language to all native speakers of Arabic;
- Improve the provision for students with special educational needs.

## Progress since the last inspection

- The curriculum in the Kindergarten had been effectively updated and was better aligned to international expectations;
- Students' attitudes and behaviour had improved throughout the school and were good;
- Students' attainment in Arabic as an additional language had improved in the middle school grades.

## Trend of overall performance



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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Islamic Education</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>English</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Mathematics</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
<b>Science</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)



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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	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
Partnerships with parents and the community	Acceptable
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Students' attainment was more acceptable than good. In Islamic Education, students in the elementary phase memorised short Surahs and Hadeeths appropriately. In the other phases, they knew Islamic teachings adequately, but showed insufficient Qur'an recitation skills. In both Arabic as a first and additional language, listening skills were strongest, while writing was a major area requiring development. In English, attainment was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in all other phases. Reading, speaking and listening skills generally matched age-related expectations, but writing skills were not well developed. In mathematics, students in the Kindergarten and elementary phases could perform appropriate arithmetic operations with confidence. Middle and high school students could accurately explain the steps which they took in their calculations. Problem solving skills in mathematics were weak in all phases. Students' attainment in science was acceptable, as they demonstrated appropriate factual knowledge of science.

Students' progress in the key subjects was mostly acceptable. In Islamic Education, students in the elementary grades demonstrated good progress in learning prayers. In other phases they showed adequate but limited progression in comprehending texts. In Arabic as a first and additional language, the productive skills of speaking and writing were the slowest to develop. In English, progress was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable across all other phases. Most of the children who joined the school with little or no English quickly developed an acceptable range of speaking, listening and reading skills. Progress in writing was slow. In mathematics, progress within lessons was good, but progress over time was less positive. In science, progress across the school was varied. Too many students lacked opportunities to participate in science experiments, so they had underdeveloped investigative skills and were not learning the scientific method.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students made up about a quarter of the student population. Their attainment and progress were broadly acceptable across all phases and subjects. They were good in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. Girls outperformed boys in all grades. Emirati students' attitudes, behaviour, attendance and punctuality were similar to those of other students. Generally, they were mature and demonstrated sensible attitudes and behaviour in classes and around the school. Their class work was assessed regularly, and analysed. The resulting information was comprehensive, but lacked accuracy when compared to international standards.

Reports to parents were regular but did not provide sufficient information on strategies for improvement. Emirati heritage, traditions and leadership development opportunities were not well supported by the school's curriculum. There was Emirati representation on the school's governing body.

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good in all phases of the school. In a few instances, students did not take appropriate responsibility for their behaviour and were disrespectful towards their teachers. Relationships between teachers and students were mostly positive and there was a high degree of mutual respect. Most students had appropriate knowledge of healthy lifestyles and the value of good diet and exercise. Attendance was acceptable and all but a few students arrived on time. The arrival of latecomers occasionally disrupted the first lessons. Students' appreciation of Islamic values, cultural and global awareness was acceptable. A majority of students knew Islamic values had an influence on different aspects of life in Dubai, but they could not always explain it in sufficient detail. Most students exhibited positive attitudes towards Emirati heritage and traditions and understood UAE history. They were well aware of the multi-cultural aspects of living in Dubai. The students' community and environmental responsibility was acceptable. Overall, students understood the importance of being involved in both the school and the community. They enjoyed working with others but did not often initiate activities. A majority of students had a general awareness of environmental issues and at times took responsibility for their surroundings.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was of acceptable quality across all phases. In the best lessons, teachers displayed good subject knowledge. They established learning objectives clearly and planned tasks to achieve their objectives. In a minority of lessons, questioning was used effectively to expand students' thinking and guide their learning. However, in most lessons, teaching was dominated by the use of textbooks and the accumulation of knowledge. This limited students' opportunities to develop thinking skills and deepen their understanding of concepts. When students were given different tasks, the tasks were sometimes not matched to their needs, either being too difficult or offering too little challenge. In the lower grades in particular, teachers were too dependent on lesson plans that did not take enough account of students'

individual needs. Learning objectives were often confused with the learning activities, so it was not possible for teachers to assess what learning students had done by the end of their lessons.

Learning was acceptable across all phases. When given opportunities, most students, particularly girls, were able to work collaboratively, share ideas and learn from each other. In the majority of lessons, students had positive attitudes and were willing to do what teachers asked of them. Most students demonstrated skills that were generally in line with expectations, but tended to rely too heavily on adults. In a few lessons, learning was disturbed by unproductive noise that was not managed well by the teachers. In most subjects, students were not provided with enough opportunities for practical or investigative learning. As a consequence, the enquiry and critical thinking skills of most students were underdeveloped.

Assessment of learning was acceptable across all phases. In a few lessons, mostly in the upper grades, assessment information was used well to match learning tasks to the needs of students, but this was not a common feature. In all phases, not enough use was made of assessment data to identify the students' individual needs. In a few lessons, teachers questioned effectively to check students' understanding and ensure that all were making good progress. However, in most lessons teachers did not check students' understanding as lessons proceeded. While there was some good marking of students' work, this was not consistently done across the school. The marking of students' books in all subjects was mostly by ticks, with little or no guidance on the standard of the work or the next steps in learning.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in the three other phases of the school. It had a clear rationale. The Kindergarten curriculum met the needs of most learners through a theme based, integrated format. A strength of the curriculum was the provision of three languages for students through all grades. The breadth and depth of the curriculum was generally acceptable, but arts were not offered to students in the upper grades. An over-emphasis on knowledge, rather than practical experiences and problem solving restricted student's growth. The opportunities to develop critical thinking skills and deepen understanding were below international standards. Comprehensive curriculum documents ensured continuity and progression, except in mathematics. The curriculum was formally reviewed each year. Transition arrangements successfully supported students in moving from one phase to another. Although the curriculum was planned to address the needs of most learners, different tasks for the same topics

were rare. Older students led special interest clubs. A few educational field trips and recreational outings enriched the curriculum. Student council members organised school and community events, but community links were not well developed. The curriculum did not comply with the Ministry of Education requirements for the teaching of Arabic.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety provisions were good. Appropriate arrangements had been made to ensure the health, safety, and security of students in all parts of the school, including buses. The canteen offered some healthy choices but more attention needed to be given to healthy eating. Food services were hygienic and orderly. Buildings were kept clean and functional. Entrance gates were secure and guards were always on duty. The movement of students on and off buses was carefully monitored. Science laboratories were secure and safety precautions were in place. Safety equipment was readily available.

The quality of support for students was acceptable. Teachers and students had good rapport in the Kindergarten, middle and high school grades. In all phases, teachers knew their students well and showed concern for their well-being. Sound practices were in place to address attendance and punctuality. Teachers frequently spoke to individual students as they worked, and students were comfortable when asking for help if needed. A counselling centre worked well to give career guidance and help with college admissions. Co-ordinators in each section were available to advise students and look after their well-being.

[View judgements](#)

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

There were important weaknesses in the school's arrangements to support students with special educational needs. The school made some effort to identify students with special educational needs, including physical or learning challenges, and gifted students. This identification was a first step, but the school had not appointed a co-ordinator or a system to provide effective support. A minority of teachers provided support to students in their classrooms. Such support was not specific to the challenges of the individual students. At no stage was there evidence of appropriate challenge or extension material for the gifted and highly able students. Systems were not established to develop individual education plans to set learning targets and approaches, carefully matched to the needs of students with special educational needs.

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was of acceptable quality. The vision for the school included the pursuit of excellence. It was clear that not all teachers shared that vision. Development priorities had not resulted in sufficiently improved learning outcomes. Although senior leaders had systems in place to try to advance the school, they remained ineffective. There was only limited understanding of how to further educational development. The senior leaders had not been able to extend teachers' understanding of basic educational ideas, resulting in an inability to improve the school. Senior managers had serious gaps in their knowledge of what was actually happening in the school. Senior managers had presided over five successive inspections which judged the school to be acceptable.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. The school development plan was generic. In the action plan, many projects were too general and did not address individual subject needs. The indication that lesson plans would be rewritten with a focus on 'differentiation' was only rarely seen in lessons. Although senior leaders evaluated lessons, they concentrated on teachers' performance, not on the students' learning. Their focus was on the process, not the results. The school's self-evaluation report was too descriptive and thus not useful for assessing the school's actual performance. The school had made efforts to address the recommendations of the previous inspection report, but had not succeeded in fully implementing any of them.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Reporting was regular but not fully informative. Parents did not know what they needed to do to support their children's learning, and neither they nor their children knew what they needed to do in order to improve. Parents were unaware of the school's priorities or plans for the future. They did not have any involvement with the school other than formal events. However, they felt welcome in the school and spoke highly of the accessibility of teachers. Links with schools other than those in the same management group were largely limited to sporting events. There was little evidence of students' learning being enhanced by collaborative action between the school and the community.

Governance of the school was acceptable. The governing body had ambitious plans for the future. Members were able to give a valuable international perspective to their advice. However, they had not shown themselves to be effective in analysing data from international examinations, or in holding the school to account. The governors did not demand greater accountability or improvement in performance above the acceptable level. Governors were unaware of the need to ensure compliance with Ministry

requirements in a few important aspects. Parental representation was through an advisory body, to which parents were appointed, and so it was not truly representative.

Management of the school was acceptable. Timetabling was generally efficient, but there were concealed issues, such as inadequately timetabled provision for non-Muslim students and for students for whom English was an additional language. Of the teaching staff, approximately two-thirds did not have a professional qualification in teaching. Although there was an induction phase, parts of this were led by teachers who had inadequate understanding of teaching themselves. The premises were of high quality. Kindergarten classes exceeded the lawful limit of 25 children. Workbooks used in almost all classes were unimaginative and repetitive. Senior students used laptops in classes, but the school had not devised programmes for their effective use. Insufficient provision of experimental equipment led to inadequate opportunities for practical work in the senior science classes.

[View judgments](#)

## 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	447	28%
	Last year	224	17%
Teachers	117		84%
Students	377		82%

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

Just over a quarter of parents responded to their survey, an increase from last year. Most parents expressed overall satisfaction with the school. A minority, around 20 per cent, were concerned about their children's attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic. A significant number, 38 per cent, felt that students were not engaged enough with the community. About a quarter did not think that consultation was good. Twenty per cent believed that teaching and learning were not good and that teachers did not help their children to improve. Overall, in many areas, there was roughly 20 per cent dissatisfaction amongst parents. Most senior students and teachers responded to their surveys. Students were most concerned about their progress in Arabic as an additional language. Only 60 per cent thought that behaviour was good. Forty per cent did not feel involved with the local community. Just over 20 per cent had negative views on teaching and on teachers' ability to help them to improve. They were very critical of the lack of choice in the curriculum, with 64 per cent of responses being negative. Thirty per cent of senior students felt that they were not treated fairly at school. Teachers were very positive about the school, but a few had negative views on the provision and use of technology and on students' choice of subjects in the curriculum.



## 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](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

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