

# INSPECTION REPORT

Collegiate American School

Report published in April 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Collegiate American School

Location	Umm Suqeim 2
Type of school	Private
Website	www.casdubai.com
Telephone	04-4271400
Address	PO Box 121306 Dubai UAE
Principal	Dr. John Andrew Westerman
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	4-14 / KG 1 to Grade 9
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	946
Largest nationality group of Students	US
Number of Emirati students	34 (about 4%)
Date of the inspection	3rd March to 5th March 2014

## 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 Emirati students?.....	15
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	16
How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?.....	17
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	18
What happens next?.....	19
How to contact us .....	19

## The context of the school

Collegiate American School is a private school located in Umm Suqeim. It has been in operation for three years. The school currently provides education for boys and girls, aged four to fourteen years, from Kindergarten to Grade 9. At the time of the inspection, there were 946 students on roll. This was an increase of 490 on the previous year. There were around 80 different nationalities represented in the student body and the largest proportion was from the US, Canada and Europe. Only 34 students were Emirati. The majority of students spoke English as an additional language and around 18 percent studied Arabic as a first language.

The school followed a standards-based curriculum using the US Common Core State Standards for English and mathematics, and the Next Generation standards for science. Islamic Education and Arabic as a first and as an additional language were also part of the core curriculum and the programmes of study followed the Ministry of Education requirements. The students were grouped into three phases covering the Kindergarten (including pre-Kindergarten), elementary phase (Grades 1 to 5), middle phase (Grades 6 to 8) and high (Grade 9). A total of 67 students were receiving support for their special educational needs.

The school employed 76 teachers and 21 support staff to assist teaching. There were four members of staff supporting students with special educational needs. The majority of the teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications and had a US educational background. 59 percent of all teachers were new to the school this year as was the Principal.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

### Key strengths

- The strong community ethos in the school;
- The outstanding health and safety arrangements;
- The quality of teaching, learning and formative assessment in Kindergarten, and the quality of the students' learning skills in elementary leading to good progress in English, mathematics and science;
- The good attitudes and behaviour of students;
- The good quality of the school curriculum.

### Recommendations

- Raise students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic through empowering teachers to:
  - Modify the curriculum to meet the needs of all students;
  - Design meaningful active learning experiences;
  - Implement effective teaching strategies;
- Improve the consistency of good teaching and learning across the school by:
  - Making better use of assessment information to modify planning in order to meet the needs of all groups of students;
  - Improving induction arrangements for new staff;
  - Implementing common, school-wide policies and practices that will impact positively on student progress;
- Improve the rate of progress of students with special educational needs by:
  - The better identification of gifted and talented students;
  - Ensuring better support in the classroom;
  - Ensuring systematic monitoring of progress by class teachers;
  - Ensuring qualified staff and appropriate physical resources are sufficient across all phases.
- 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.

## Progress since the last inspection

- The school had focused on raising students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic but attainment had only improved in Arabic as a first language in elementary;
- Students' personal and social development had been improved. The children in Kindergarten and the students in elementary and middle had a greater awareness and understanding of Islamic values. The importance of conservation and environmental sustainability to the students had also shown some improvement;
- Teaching had not measurably improved this year, however 60 percent of the teachers were new. The development of learning skills improved in the elementary phase.
- Use of assessment information for planning learning, checking progress and giving feedback to students had only improved slightly.
- The school had developed the management structure to take account of its increasing size.

## Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)



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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable in elementary and unsatisfactory in the middle and high school phases. Most middle and high school students' Quran recitation skills were underdeveloped. Students' knowledge and understanding of major Islamic concepts, values and principles of practice were below the expected level except in the elementary school. Across all phases, most students had just adequate understanding of Seerah. Overall, students' ability to establish useful links between their learning and their everyday life was limited. Attainment in Arabic as a first language was acceptable in elementary where most students demonstrated appropriate levels of listening, speaking, reading and basic writing skills. Attainment was unsatisfactory in the middle phase. Speaking skills of most middle school students were underdeveloped, relying heavily on colloquial Arabic rather than standard structures. A significant proportion of students struggled to comprehend age-appropriate texts. Writing was a major weakness. Attainment was better in Arabic as an additional language, where it was acceptable in all three phases. However, students over-relied on English translations to understand questions and instructions. Most students were starting to read appropriately. Students' writing skills were limited to copying and writing very simple, short phrases and sentences using a limited range of familiar words. In English attainment was good in Kindergarten and elementary and acceptable in Middle and High. Most students could analyse the elements of stories, identify the traits of characters and make inferences or predictions at age-appropriate levels. They wrote with a clear purpose. Young students showed strength in early literacy skills. In mathematics attainment was good in KG and Elementary and acceptable in Middle and High. Kindergarten children had a good grasp of number, place value, and shape. Elementary students used their well-developed numeracy skills in calculations and to solve real life problems. A significant number of middle and high school students had gaps in their knowledge and understanding of number and algebra. In science, attainment was good in Elementary and acceptable in Kindergarten, Middle and High. Most Kindergarten children had a basic knowledge and were developing their investigative skills. By the time that they reached elementary, practical science skills were stronger. Most students in the middle and high school phases had appropriate knowledge and understanding.

Progress in Islamic Education was acceptable in elementary and unsatisfactory in the middle and high school phases. Students in middle and high school made very limited progress in Qur'an recitation. In all phases, students' knowledge was better developed than their understanding. Application and links to real world were underdeveloped skills for most students, particularly in the middle and high phases. Elementary school students made acceptable progress in Arabic as a first language whereas it was unsatisfactory for middle school students. The slowest progress was in speaking and writing, particularly in the higher phases. Across the two phases, students'

interpretive and higher-order thinking skills were underdeveloped. In Arabic as an additional language, students' progress was acceptable in all three phases based on their variable years of study of Arabic. Students showed faster progress in learning vocabulary and reading than in the rest of the language aspects. In English, mathematics and science progress was good in Kindergarten and elementary and acceptable in the middle and high phases. Students in the lower phases made good progress in their English speaking, listening, writing and reading skills, while older students showed acceptable gains in writing. Kindergarten children make good gains in numeracy from their starting points. This continued throughout the elementary grades but was not consistently extended in the middle and high school phases. Progress in science in the lower phases was more rapid because of the opportunities that the students had for practical, collaborative learning in the classroom. In the middle and high phases, students were more dependent on the teacher for developing their understanding of concepts and applying their skills.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were good in the Kindergarten and elementary phases and acceptable in the middle and high phases. Students were keen to learn. They sustained their interest when studies were matched to their ability and the topic was interesting and relevant to their own lives. They especially enjoyed working alongside their classmates, sharing ideas and applying their new learning to different contexts. They were increasingly confident in explaining their ideas and justifying their answers. Most could reflect on what they had learnt and focus on what to do next. Students had insufficient opportunities to demonstrate their skills in using technology to carry out research and take responsibility for their own learning. Whilst most middle and high school students could work well independently or in groups, a minority was too dependent on adult help and the students rarely initiated or extended their learning by asking questions or investigating.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students' personal and social development were good across the school. Most students had positive attitudes and demonstrated self-reliance. They exercised self-control and were courteous and friendly to teachers, peers and all other adults despite a few isolated incidents. Most students showed independence of mind and cooperated well with others, including those with special needs. The majority of students had a strong commitment to following a healthy life style. Attendance and punctuality to lessons was good.

Students in Kindergarten, elementary and middle school phases had a good appreciation of the role and values of Islam in the society of Dubai but it was acceptable high school. Most students could discuss the influence of Islam on people living in Dubai as manifested in the celebrations, food, customs, and lifestyle. In high school, most students were able to identify some distinctive features of the UAE, and were aware of the rapid growth that had taken place over the past decades. However, their awareness of Islamic values and local culture was less well developed. All students except those in high school had good knowledge and understanding of their own and others' culture and could make intelligent comparisons between the different nationalities and enjoyed their cosmopolitan cultural differences.

Students demonstrated good community and environmental responsibility in the Kindergarten, elementary and middle phases of the school. In the high school it was acceptable. Nearly all students, throughout the school, showed responsibility, and carried out classroom duties well. Student councils were in place for both the elementary and middle phases. There were some links with the wider community but these were limited. Students in all phases had a good work ethic, and were actively involved in projects at the classroom level. Recycling was a developing practice in the school, although the understanding of conservation and environmental sustainability was not yet embedded.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was good in Kindergarten and acceptable in the other phases. In the best lessons, teachers were confident in their subject knowledge and inspired students. They understood how students learned and established a suitable climate for learning in which relationships were positive and students were enthusiastic and felt supported. They had high expectations for behaviour and planned interesting and enjoyable activities matched to the range of students' abilities and interests. They varied their strategies and resources to engage and motivate students and were skilful in asking questions which challenged them to extend their understanding and justify their answers. In a significant number of lessons, most noticeably Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language, teachers did not take sufficient

account of the needs of individual students and were unclear about the best strategies to help students to learn. They did not have clear expectations for behaviour and progress and provided students with too few opportunities for independent learning, collaboration and research.

Assessment was good in Kindergarten and acceptable in the elementary, middle and high school phases. Across the Kindergarten phase, thorough systems and programmes of assessment of and for learning were developed and implemented effectively to provide accurate data and track students' progress systematically. Measures of Academic Progress tests were used from the elementary to the high phase in order to provide external benchmarked student progress data. Unfortunately the transient nature of the school population and insufficient training in interpreting results had inhibited its effectiveness. The school had recently introduced 'I can' sheets and assessment rubrics for students in order to involve them in the process of assessment of their learning and these were beginning to make an impact. Summative assessments were not yet closely aligned to the full breadth of the curriculum standards and tended to test superficial levels of understanding and conceptual development. When feedback was given it was generally too generic rather than commenting specifically against the learning intention. Teachers used assessment information more effectively in Kindergarten to modify planning to meet the needs of all students.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good in all phases. It was based on the US Common Core standards, MoE requirements, AERO, Next Generation Science and selected state standards. There was continuity between phases as a vertical alignment system was in place and it offered breadth and balance. The rationale was clearer in the elementary, middle and high phases. The curriculum was reviewed and analysed to suit the needs of a growing school. A variety of enrichment opportunities were part of the school curriculum, including music, Art, French and Spanish for all age groups, a sports programme, and after school activities embracing divergent student interests. There were regularly scheduled curricular options for the middle and high school phases. Cross-curricular links were strong in Kindergarten. Links were being made with the community in the rest of the school, but these were not yet strong features.

The design of the curriculum to meet the needs of individual students was good in the Kindergarten, elementary and middle school phases and acceptable in the high school phase. The curriculum was reviewed and analysed at the medium term planning level and modifications were made to address the learning needs of specific groups of students. Teachers in a majority of classes modified the curriculum or made other adaptations to meet students' needs. After school activities provided learning opportunities to

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match the interests of most students. Students in the middle and high school phases had some element of choice, with the provision of a few regularly scheduled curricular options.

[View judgements](#)

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

Health and safety arrangements at the school were outstanding. The school provided a very safe and secure learning environment. A clearly understood range of detailed policies, covering maintenance, fire, transportation and health promotion guided provision. Bus safety procedures were stringently followed and arrival and departure arrangements were carefully supervised. The premises were clean and maintained in an excellent condition. Appropriate fire drills were carried out and advice taken from Civil Defense on evacuation procedures. Students reported that they felt very safe in school. Staff members were aware of students' medical needs and the medical staff provided valuable support and input to the school's health education programme. Medicines were stored safely and administered responsibly by the medical staff. Healthy living was actively promoted by the school and the cafeteria provided nutritious food. All members of staff were fully aware of child safety procedures.

The quality of support at the school was good. Staff-student relationships were strong. Attendance and punctuality had been a recent focus and had improved. Students with additional needs were welcomed to the school, and new screening tools had been introduced. Additional specialist staff had improved the quality of support for children to some extent. Learning support staff provided effective support either in class or during withdrawal sessions. In-class support provided by teachers was inconsistent as some did not understand the learning needs of their students and often had the same expectations for all. This led to variable progress across grades and most subjects, especially in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. The two school counsellors were skilled in supporting students' social and emotional well-being.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of leadership in the school was good. Senior leaders were hardworking and committed to the school values, which had been successfully shared with the school community. The leadership team had one senior position that had been unfilled. Leadership was appropriately delegated and had been strengthened by the appointment of Middle Leaders, some of whom led cross grade teams, whilst others were responsible for curriculum areas throughout the school. Training has taken place for leaders on the monitoring of teaching and learning. School leaders had a strong commitment to school improvement, however many were new to their posts and their efforts had yet to have a positive impact on school improvement. Relationships between leaders were professional and communication channels were clear and effective. Roles and responsibilities were clearly detailed in their job descriptions. Most leaders had the capacity to move the school forward.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The gathering of information was a systematic process involving all of the school community. The school improvement plan contained a thorough evaluative description of the school's performance. Close attention had been given to the recommendations from DSIB and these formed the majority of the objectives of the school's improvement plan. The direction that the school had taken and the targets that it had set were appropriate. However, there was insufficient understanding of how much progress had been made. Professional development was effectively identified through the staff performance management system as well as being linked to the school improvement plan. There has been some progress with most of the DSIB recommendations.

Links with parents and the community were good. Parents had extensive information to support their children's learning, which included weekly feedback from teachers and previews of learning programmes. There was a wide range of channels for communication including some in the Arabic language. Parent-teacher conferences were well attended. Student grades were posted online and reports contained evaluations of personal and academic growth and guidance on how students could improve. There was an encouraging range of partnerships with the community and other schools, which enhanced student learning. These involved a limited number of students. Many parents were fully involved in the life of the school.

Governance was good. The Governing Body was guided by the School Advisory Council, which included a wide range of expertise and experience. There were regular opportunities for members of the school community to communicate with the Governing Body, through the School Advisory Council, both formally

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

at the termly meetings and informally through social events. Meetings and reports covered issues including students' progress, improvement planning and self-evaluation. However, the picture that the Governing Body had from the School Advisory Council was not sufficiently accurate and retention of school leaders was a continuing problem. The Governing Body responded positively to requests from the School Advisory Council and ensured that all statutory requirements were met.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources were good. Management of most day-to-day routines and activities was effective. The majority of teachers had educational qualifications and their deployment was appropriate. Recruitment procedures, so important in a rapidly growing school, were limited. There were sufficient opportunities for training. The school had a generous range of attractive learning environments and there was sufficient additional space for future development. There were a variety of resources and a robust ICT infrastructure.

[View judgements](#)

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

Emirati students represented about four percent of the whole student body and around twenty percent of the Arab students attending the school. Attainment and progress were mainly acceptable across all phases and subjects. The exception was English where they made good progress. The school tracked and recorded the achievements of Emirati students from Grade 2 onwards in English, mathematics and science. Emirati students behaved well, had a good attitude to their learning and related well to their peers and teachers. Their attendance and punctuality were in line with other students. Emirati students' personal responsibility, their Islamic understanding, and their cultural and global awareness were good across all phases of the school. The parents of Emirati students were involved in cultural events such as the National Day celebrations.



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

The quality of support and the provision for students with special educational needs was acceptable. The appointment of a new Learning Support Services (LSS) Coordinator had been a significant development since the last inspection. Together with her newly established team, she had a clear vision for, and commitment to improving provision for students with additional learning needs. Appropriate policies were in place and students, with a wide range of abilities, were admitted and welcomed. Early identification of needs was a priority although it was not yet wholly effective in identifying students who were gifted and talented. The school was committed to effective partnership work with parents and involved them as first educators in supporting their children's learning at home and, on occasion, in school. LSS staff provided effective support either in class or during withdrawal sessions. The counsellors were skilled in supporting students' social and emotional well-being. In-class support, provided by teachers, was inconsistent. In the best lessons, teachers had a clear understanding of the needs of all their students. They adapted the curriculum, planned suitable activities and had appropriate expectations for the most and the least able. They made available the necessary resources to deepen understanding and their students made good progress. Support was less effective where teachers did not understand the learning needs of their students and often had the same expectations for all. Some students struggled with their work because it was too challenging whilst others found it too easy. Consequently, progress was at best acceptable and sometimes unsatisfactory. The LSS Coordinator's monitoring of students' progress was sometimes hindered because teachers did not always provide assessment updates on time.

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

Most teachers of Arabic as a first language had secure subject knowledge; however their understanding of how students better learn was limited, particularly in the middle school. Lesson planning was weak as most plans were not based on clear curriculum expectations or students' different learning needs. Except in the lower elementary, teacher talk was excessive and dominated most lessons; teaching strategies were ineffective and failed to engage a significant proportion of students. Implemented activities did not often present meaningful learning experiences for students to enable them to stretch their various language skills. This made their lessons dull and the pace of learning slow, with limited linguistic development for many students in lessons. Interaction between teachers and students was limited and students' engagement and collaboration was not a feature of most lessons observed.

The school based its curriculum on the Ministry of Education standards and expectations were defined in appropriate documents; however, this was not efficiently utilised by the teaching staff and the planned activities in too many lessons failed to address these standards. The assessment of students' performance was not adequately aligned to the declared standards.

## 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	159	20%
	Last year	87	22%
Teachers	40		53%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

There were no student responses due to the age of students in the school. Most parents and teachers were satisfied with the school. Nearly all parents agreed that students made good progress in English and science and most thought that their children's progress was good in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first and as an additional language and mathematics. Nearly all parents believed that their children enjoyed school and that teachers provided a good quality education. Most responded that teachers provided good feedback to support future learning and that students had access to a wide range of technology. Most agreed that the time allocated for homework was appropriate and nearly all were able to support learning at home. Most parents were positive about the breadth, richness and challenge of the curriculum and were happy that their children were safe at school and on the buses. Few parents replied about the school's special educational needs arrangements but most teachers were positive about the provision and the majority believed that there was sufficient support for students with special educational needs. Most parents and the majority of teachers believed that the school was well led and that the school valued their views. Nearly all parents acknowledged the value of reports and parent consultation meetings. All teachers reported that they were involved in curriculum review and improvement planning. The majority of teachers felt that there were sufficient opportunities for professional development and time for planning.

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

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