

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Mawakeb School - Al Garhoud

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Mawakeb School - Al Garhoud

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.almawakeb.sch.ae
Telephone	04-2851415
Address	P.O. Box 10799, Al Garhoud, Dubai
Principal	Nubugh Nasr/Omar Hatoum, Acting Head
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2,415
Number of Emirati students	439 (18%)
Date of the inspection	Sunday 26th February to Thursday 1st March 2012

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The context of the school

This Al Mawakeb School campus is situated in Al Garhoud. The school opened in September 1979. Currently, the school has a total roll of 2,415 students, aged three to 18 years. The school followed a modified US curriculum. Students were entered for MAP testing at the end of the secondary phase and a few students took the SAT on a voluntary basis.

There were 155 full-time teachers, including the Principal and a senior leadership team. Almost all teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. They were supported by 15 teaching assistants. Students were grouped in 86 classes with five to seven classes at each year group of the school from Kindergarten to Year 12. Around 439 students, approximately 18 per cent of all students were Emirati. Over 60 different nationalities were represented among the student population.

At the time of the inspection, the Principal was in his third year as acting principal and 35 teachers were recently appointed to the school.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Al Mawakeb School – Al Garhoud provided an acceptable quality of education. Areas of strength included students' progress in Islamic Education in the elementary school and Arabic as a first language in the elementary and middle schools. Overall, English attainment and progress was good in the Kindergarten, middle and high school. Students demonstrated good attainment and progress in mathematics in the middle and high school. In the good lessons, students were actively engaged. The Kindergarten provided a tri-lingual program using Arabic, English and French for instruction throughout the day. Students' attitude and behaviour was good across the school and a good understanding of their culture and local traditions was noted in the middle and high schools. Teaching, learning and assessment was acceptable at almost all levels with the high school demonstrating good teaching and learning. Classes that were designed to actively engage students in the learning process were most effective. However, most classes were teacher directed and contained a disproportionate amount of teacher talk and reliance on worksheets. Curriculum adjustments were leading to improved teaching. However, the improved practice was not imbedded

across all levels and subjects in the school. Provisions for health and safety were good across the school. Arrangements were in place to ensure students health, safety and security within the school. School leadership was good and demonstrated the capacity to direct the effective curricular and non-curricular functions of the school.

Key strengths

- Good relationships between teachers and students across all levels of the school;
- Good career guidance for high school students;
- The opportunity for a tri-lingual education from Kindergarten to Grade 12;
- Good arrangements were in place to ensure student's health and safety and security in the school.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment and progress in key subject areas with a focus on imbedding critical thinking skills, research and independent learning in all lessons;
- Ensure compliance with Ministry of Education requirements in relation to the teaching of Arabic as a first language;
- Improve the quality of teaching in the elementary and middle school phases of the school and ensure, in particular, that tasks are appropriately differentiated to meet the varying learning needs of students;
- Provide a Kindergarten curriculum that demonstrates alignment to international best practice so that student progress can be more accurately measured;
- Identify and monitor students with special education needs and ensure their individual learning requirements are met in the classroom.

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

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

Attainment was acceptable in the majority of subjects. Attainment was good in Arabic as a first language in the elementary school. Most students understood the prescribed verses and were able to interpret them correctly. In Arabic, their pronunciations were very clear with few mistakes. English was good in the Kindergarten, middle and high schools. In almost all classes, students demonstrated at least age appropriate vocabulary and speaking and listening skills. Student understanding and speaking of English

was a strength across the school. Mathematics attainment was good in the middle and high school and high school students used higher order thinking skills to solve problems in calculus. Attainment in science was good in the middle school. However, there were weak levels of experimental skills, particularly in relation to planning and hypothesizing. Overall, the girls performed better than the boys.

Progress was varied across the school and across all key subjects. There was good progress in Islamic Education and in Arabic in the elementary and middle schools. Most students demonstrated a good range of vocabulary and listening and speaking skills. English was the strongest subject with good progress in the Kindergarten, middle and high schools and acceptable in the elementary school. Although progress was good in most grades, it was hampered by lack of challenge and opportunities for creative writing. Progress in mathematics was good in the middle and high Schools but only acceptable in the Kindergarten and elementary levels due to the lack of opportunities to demonstrate application of their learning. Science progress was good in the elementary and middle Schools and acceptable in the Kindergarten and high school. In both phases, most student progress was limited due to the lack independent thinking and hands-on learning opportunities.

Emirati students had acceptable attainment in majority of key subjects and it was in line with their peers. In Islamic Education a few Emirati students demonstrated good attainment; they had good Qur'an recitation skills. In English, the majority of Emiratis had good listening and speaking skills with the exception of elementary where it was acceptable. In mathematics, a majority of Emiratis had good attainment in middle and high, and acceptable in Kindergarten and elementary.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

The students across the school demonstrated positive behaviour. They had strong relationships with teachers and the school staff and each other. They had a good sense of responsibility towards their learning. They were aware of healthy lifestyles. Student attendance was good though a few students were late coming to school. The students in middle and high school had a good understanding of Islam and its impact on the modern society in Dubai and internationally. Students appreciated the multi-cultural nature of their school and Dubai as well as their own cultures. They respected and understood the local traditions and heritage. The high school students had a good understanding of how Dubai and the other emirates had developed. This knowledge was not as well developed in other stages of the school. Students knew their responsibilities as member of the school. A few students helped keep the school clean and tidy. However, student-led activities to improve their environment were limited.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

The quality of teaching was acceptable in Kindergarten, elementary and middle school and good in the high school. Teachers had good subject knowledge in most departments. Teachers planned lessons well and most teachers shared learning objectives at the beginning of their lessons. In the best lessons teachers checked their students' learning against the original objectives during the lesson and through the plenary. In Islamic Education teachers used good pace in lessons at the elementary level. Overall, most teachers used a limited range of resources and relied too much upon textbooks and worksheets. Mathematics was mostly taught abstractly. In science across the phases, teachers did not use a sufficient range of practical activities. The pace of lessons tended to be quite slow with too much time allocated to question and answers. Across most subjects teachers did not ask sufficiently demanding questions to challenge students' thinking.

The quality of learning was acceptable in Kindergarten, elementary and middle school and good in the high school. Throughout the school, most children and students showed positive attitudes towards learning. However, too often, teacher talk dominated lessons and in most subjects there was very little independent learning observed. In a Grade 11 English class on slavery, students worked well together and developed critical and analytical thinking. Examples of such practice were infrequent. In Kindergarten, science learning was mostly knowledge based. In a few classes, teaching strategies did not allow students the opportunity to collaborate and learn from each other. In a Grade 11 chemistry lesson the teacher used the plenary to revisit the learning objectives and encouraged students to summarize the learning. In a few lessons observed students were able to make connections between what was being learned and their daily lives. Differentiation was mentioned in lesson plans but not always observed in action. In most lessons students worked from same page and did not always listen carefully to each other when answering questions.

The quality of assessment was acceptable across all phases. The school had developed systems for collecting assessment data and tracking results. Internal data was collated. The analysis of the data was limited to identifying general trends. In Islamic Education the department tracked students' progress using grades but effective use of the data was limited. In a minority of subjects and grades, teachers used assessment information to identify discrete skills and targets for students. The school had started to use external assessments to help check progress of students against international standards. Assessment of understanding in the classroom during discussions was not recorded. Teachers' marking varied in quality and often did not include next steps in learning for students.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The formal curriculum implemented this school year was broad, balanced and linked to international standards. Organizational structure of the curriculum provided continuity, progression and transition to the next learning phase. The curriculum met the majority of students' learning needs in Grades 1 to 12 but most often relied on textbooks, which limited learning opportunities for critical thinking, research and independent learning. Extra-curricular activities existed but were not always effectively integrated with student's learning experiences. The Kindergarten curriculum was not based on international standards and restricted the learning of higher achieving students. The organization of the Arabic curriculum required review to effectively meet the individual needs of all students. Arab students were permitted to attend classes for students for whom Arabic was an additional language.

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	Good

There were good arrangements in place to ensure students' health, safety and security, within the school, on the school grounds and on the school buses. The majority of students stated they felt safe at school. However, more attention needed to be given to the safety of students as they exited and entered the school at the beginning and end of the school day. Additional efforts were also needed to be made to ensure that all staff and students were aware of child protection arrangements. The school premises, equipment, and resources were suitable and the premises were clean, safe, and accessible for all students. The school medical staff provided physicals for students and records of health were up-to-date. The school medical staff also provided sound advice about healthy living and promoted healthy eating. The school canteen offered some healthy choices, but more attention needed to be given to healthy eating.

The quality of support in Kindergarten, elementary and middle phases was acceptable and was good in high school. Relationships between students and teachers were good. Most teachers provided good care to students but academic guidance was variable. The monitoring of behavior was good. The school counselor provided good career and higher education placement advice for older students. Identification of students with special educational needs was unsatisfactory. The learning needs of less able and a few more able had been identified. However, identification of students with special education needed to be addressed. Learning plans were not always shared with students and they varied in quality from subject to subject. There were effective monitoring systems in place to ensure good attendance and punctuality.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The leadership of the school was good. The Acting Principal worked well with the other senior leaders, meeting regularly to discuss both curricular and non-curricular matters. The leadership team had the capacity to lead improvement as evidenced in steps taken to improve the curriculum and the delivery of instruction. This process was in the beginning stages and had yet to have the school-wide impact that was planned. The Principal had a thorough knowledge of all aspects of the school and its supporting operations.

Systematic and organized improvement planning was acceptable and the school had addressed all recommendations from the previous report. Strategies were devised to involve all staff members and address all levels and areas requiring improvement. The action plan and devised strategies were clearly shared with all staff and the governance committee and systematically reviewed in subject area meetings. Progress had been noted in some areas but had not become imbedded practice throughout the school. Development of student support programs needed to be continued to address more fully the recommendations in the current and previous reports.

Partnerships with parents and the community was acceptable. Parents were kept informed of their student's progress through written correspondence, the website and regularly scheduled parent meetings. Parents had a high degree of satisfaction with the school overall. Parent surveys and interviews expressed good approval of the school leadership team. Productive links existed between the school, parents and greater community. Effective reporting of student progress was evident. Parents requested more emphasis on extra-curricular activities to expand the school's offerings.

The governance structure was acceptable. The governance committee had a positive influence on the functioning of the school. Parents were represented on the governing committee. The governance committee reviewed all plans for school improvement based on input from senior management and parents.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. The management of most aspects of the school's procedures and routines was effective and efficient. Staff were suitably qualified and there was a good range of training for staff. The premises and facilities provided a clean and safe environment, and all areas for learning were accessible to students, including those with additional needs. However, a few classrooms were too small for the number of students in them. Some surfaces in hallways, classrooms, and workrooms need to be repaired, and some air conditioners needed to be repaired or replaced. The library was well stocked.

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	386	26%
	Last year	494	19%
Teachers	104		69%
Students	177		38%

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

Most of the parents who responded were pleased with the overall quality of the school. Most parents felt the quality of the Islamic instruction was good while a majority of parents felt the Arabic for first language speakers and for additional language speakers was acceptable. Teaching skills in English, mathematics and science were all viewed positively. Most parents felt satisfied with the school's support for children with special education needs. Most parents felt their children enjoyed school and demonstrated a good understanding of Islam and their Muslim heritage. A majority of parents indicated they would like to have seen a wider range of subjects and extra-curricular activities to expand and enrich the school's curriculum. A minority of respondents indicated a low degree of parent involvement in the school and felt they could be used more effectively to assist their children and the school. Also, links with the wider community were present but limited.

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

Our work with schools

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

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

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

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