

INSPECTION REPORT

Nibras International School

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Nibras International School

Location	Green Community
Type of school	Private
Website	www.nisdubai.ae
Telephone	04-8853330
Address	PO Box 54084, Dubai
Principal	Mrs Agnes Shaw
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	3-18 / Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	710
Largest nationality group of Students	Arab
Number of Emirati students	20 (3%)
Date of the inspection	7th to 9th January 2013

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The context of the school

Nibras International School is located in the Green Community and is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12, aged three to 18 years.

The school followed a US curriculum and had recently adopted the Colorado Academic Standards throughout the school. It had also recently extended the range of Advanced Placement examinations it offered. Students were being prepared for SATs more extensively and the International School Assessment was being used to support the school's own assessment.

At the time of the inspection, there were 710 students, a rise of 164 from the previous inspection. They represented 80 different nationalities. In all, 339 students spoke Arabic as a first language, 20 of whom were Emirati and there were 89 students identified with a special education need. There were 48 full-time teachers and three assistant teachers with full teaching responsibilities. All were suitably qualified with almost a half having teaching certification. The new Principal had been in post since April 2012 and a large majority of the teachers had been appointed since September 2012. A few teachers had only been in post for a few weeks.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The continued effectiveness of Kindergarten;
- Students' very good progress in speaking and listening;
- Students' positive attitudes, and their respectful and good relationships throughout the school;
- The very good start in implementing a new curriculum;
- The strategic and operational leadership provided by the Chairman of the Board and the Principal, which had led to considerable change and innovation since the previous inspection.

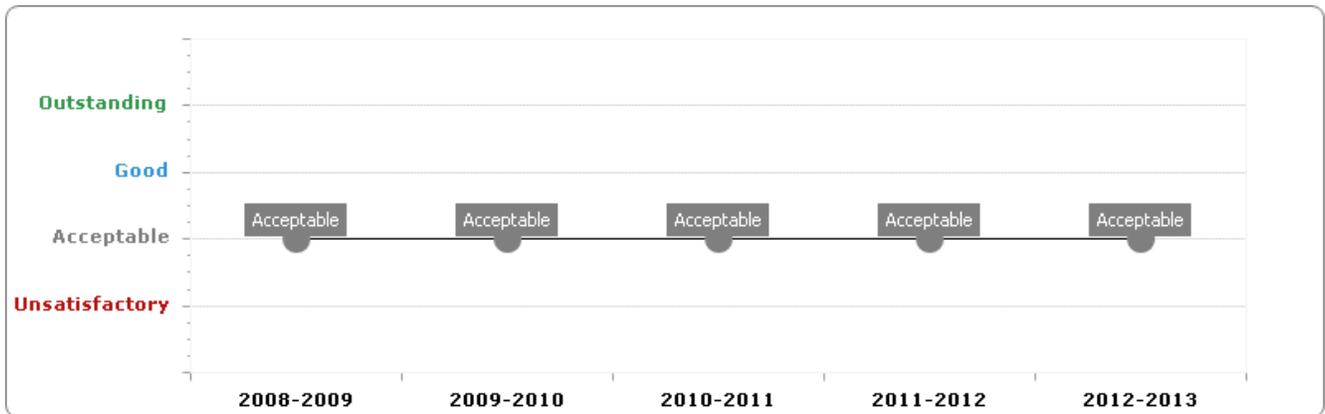
Recommendations

- Improve the progress of students across the school, particularly in mathematics and science in the high school;
- Engage students more actively and effectively in their learning, and so promote more independent learning and research;
- Improve the analysis and use of assessment data to promote the progress of individual students and groups of students more effectively;
- Build on the systematic approach to self-evaluation by developing more robust data and analysing it thoroughly;
- Further develop strategies to recruit and retain high calibre teachers, and to reduce the very high turnover of teachers.

Progress since the last inspection

- The progress of those students who speak English as an additional language had significantly improved;
- Elements of teaching had improved, but this had been insufficient to make a significant impact as yet on student attainment;
- The requirements of the Ministry of Education in Islamic Education and Arabic were now fully met. A successful review of the curriculum had taken place, and its breadth and balance had been improved sufficiently in most areas;
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was still under-used to promote independent learning and research sufficiently;
- Good progress had been made in developing a systematic process for self-evaluation and improvement planning to monitor academic standards, but it still lacked sufficient rigour.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[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	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	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	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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	Good
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Students' attainment overall was acceptable, although in Kindergarten it was good. In Islamic Education, most elementary students could recite well and memorised many surahs from The Holy Qur'an. Most middle phase students had age-appropriate knowledge about the forms of worship but older students had insufficient understanding about Zakat. The understanding of Islamic concepts and rulings by most non-Arab Muslim students was underdeveloped. In Arabic as a first language, reading was fluent and comprehension was good. Extended writing was good in the middle and high phases. In Arabic as an additional language, most students had well-developed listening skills and used well-structured sentences. However, writing skills were limited across school. In English, Kindergarten children had good speaking and listening skills, a strength across the school, and used phonics to build simple but unfamiliar words. Middle phase students wrote using complex sentence structures with correct spelling and punctuation. In mathematics, Kindergarten children were able to count, compare and order numbers to 20 and create simple pictograms. Students in elementary and middle phases, understood place value and recorded data in accurate scale drawings. High school students performed basic algebraic operations and manipulation, but often did not know how to use them. In science, attainment was good in Kindergarten and elementary phase because basic science skills were secure and developed well through investigation. This was not consistently the case in the middle and high school phases.

Overall, students' progress was acceptable; it was good in Kindergarten. In Islamic Education, it was good in elementary phase and acceptable elsewhere. Progress was weakest in the middle phase where the students made limited connections between Islamic issues and their lives. In Arabic as a first language, reading skills were developing well. In Arabic as an additional language, progress with listening skills was steady but less progress was made in developing writing and reading. In English, students made very good progress in speaking and listening but the development of cursive writing was slow. In mathematics, students sometimes lacked the confidence to explain their methods to solve problems, or indeed solve them unaided. In science, progress in Kindergarten and the elementary phase was good; progress for older students was acceptable. Students with special educational needs made similar progress to their peers, except in Kindergarten and in the elementary phase, where it was good.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students' attainment and progress were varied. Attainment was good in Islamic Education and English and acceptable in other subjects. Students made good progress in Islamic Education, Arabic and English but acceptable progress in mathematics and science. Attendance was acceptable but a few students had very high absence rates. Punctuality was good overall especially in the high school. Students' attitudes and behaviour were good and they had positive attitudes to work. Students generally completed their homework but not always for high school mathematics. Teachers were aware of the progress of Emirati students in their classes and, those with additional needs were provided with special support. Parents were welcomed and encouraged to be involved in their children's education. They valued the multi-cultural environment at the school. Emiratis were represented on the newly constituted School Advisory Board. Emirati families helped to plan and organise the school's National Day celebrations.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students behaved well towards each other, their teachers and school leaders. They followed healthy lifestyles that promoted regular physical activity and sensible eating habits. Some students assumed responsibility roles such as ambassadors and Kindergarten helpers. The School Council was active and was to be represented on the School Advisory Board. However, there were not enough opportunities to develop a broad range of responsibilities. The school's records showed good attendance. However, attendance rates had been lower in previous weeks, particularly in Kindergarten and Grades 11 and 12, where they had been unsatisfactory. Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness were acceptable. Most students were aware of the impact Islamic values had on Dubai society and the world. They showed significant respect and understood the Emirati traditions and the heritage of the UAE. However, they made limited connections between cultures and were insufficiently aware of the impact of the cultural diversity on Dubai. Students were aware of the responsibilities they had in the school community and benefited from some links with the local and broader community. This included some work-shadowing, visits by the police to promote safety and participation in local events, such as the Young Entrepreneur Competition and developing links with a few universities. Students took care of their classrooms and recreation areas. Sometimes students were involved in activities which supported sustainability. However, their involvement and their initiatives in local community and environmental projects were limited.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in the other phases of the school. Most lessons were well planned and provided tasks that were appropriate to the needs of students. Most teachers managed the students well so that they were keen to learn. Many teachers developed excellent relationships with their students. In a minority of Islamic Education and Arabic classes, the teaching was too formal and so students remained overly passive for much of the time. There was insufficient planned use of information and communications technology to promote learning in many classes. Although lessons were often delivered at a good pace, teachers too often rushed or missed the round-up sessions at the end. When teaching lacked appropriate strategies, such as clearly explaining tasks, effective questioning and reviews of learning, it was not effective. As a result, students became disengaged and made much slower progress.

Learning was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in all other phases. Most students had very positive attitudes to learning and could happily complete tasks with minimal teacher supervision. Many sought and attended additional support sessions on a voluntary basis. Students in all phases enjoyed working together in pairs or in small groups; they were able to consider each other's views carefully and then moderate their own position to reach a consensus. However, this was not always sufficiently developed. Although younger students were increasingly given opportunities to take responsibility for their learning, senior students had too few opportunities to carry out independent research. Students in mathematics and science were not sufficiently encouraged to construct and test hypotheses or think critically. In high school mathematics, a minority of students were not sufficiently confident to solve problems in class without the help of the teacher.

The school's assessment of students' progress was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in all other phases. The assessments undertaken when students began school contained a broad range of academic, personal and social criteria and, together with the individual progress trackers, provided an effective means of monitoring children's progress in the Kindergarten. Self- and peer-assessment had been successfully introduced into some classrooms so that students were more aware of their own achievements and progress. The quality of marking of students' work was very varied. In only a few lessons, students benefited from encouragement and detailed feedback on how to improve their work. School leaders did not use a coherent procedure for monitoring and tracking students' progress across grades. The analysis and use of data to tracking the progress of individual students and across grades was not sufficiently rigorous. The needs of students with English as an additional language were accurately assessed.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good in Kindergarten and the elementary and middle phases, and acceptable in the high school. The school had met the requirements of the Ministry of Education in Islamic Education and Arabic and provided additional time for these subjects. The curriculum had undergone a rigorous review and, as a result, the Colorado Academic Standards had been chosen and implemented in a comprehensive manner. The curriculum now provided ample opportunities for cross-curricular links and critical thinking. The Kindergarten curriculum was thematic and well integrated. It provided more opportunities for children to learn through play and creative activity. Students in high school could follow Advanced Placement courses, but the range and choice of electives available was limited and did not meet the needs of all students. The school offered a good range of extra-curricular activities, including clubs and varsity teams that enriched students' learning across all phases; however, there were too few opportunities for students to serve the community.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school had good health and safety procedures which it reinforced regularly. The buildings and equipment were secure and safe, but in need of some maintenance in a few areas. Students were well supervised in buses, classrooms, playgrounds, canteen and break areas. Healthy lifestyles were promoted school-wide, and a nurse and doctor effectively ran the school clinic and managed the medical records. Most staff and students were aware of child protection arrangements.

The well-being of students was a high priority for senior leaders and other staff members. Teachers knew their students and were responsive to their needs. The school ensured that records of attendance and punctuality were rigorously monitored. The strengthening of punctuality policies had improved so that lessons started promptly. Behaviour management was defined clearly and staff understood how to implement the behaviour policies. The newly appointed counselor supported older students in preparation for further education including their choices of future education pathways and the required qualifications.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students with special needs were admitted into the school. The school was good at identifying specific learning needs at an early stage. Shadow teachers were available to help meet these needs and, with the special educational needs co-ordinator, advised teachers on how to support students. Individual education plans included appropriate details to support learning and targets were agreed and reviewed with parents to promote good progress. There were detailed student profiles in place across the school for individuals identified with special educational needs. The school also used individualised monitoring and tracking plans to support the students' learning.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was good. The Principal showed strong drive and clear direction with a focus on improving standards, teaching and learning. She was well supported and complemented by senior leaders and some middle leaders with improved roles. There were high expectations of staff and of their performance. Most staff teams worked effectively and were held to account for their performance. The school showed a good capacity to improve further but there was some variation across leadership. A few leaders were not effective enough in raising standards.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Self-evaluation was systematic and becoming embedded. It now extensively involved teachers and other stakeholders, but was based on insufficiently rigorous data and its analysis. As a result, judgements were sometimes inaccurate. A great amount of change, innovation and improvement had taken place or was planned. Extensive training and development identified reflected both school improvement priorities and individual teachers' needs, with a strong focus on improving teaching. There had been significant progress since the last inspection, but this had been insufficient in teaching to make any significant impact.

The school's partnership with parents was good. Parents felt welcomed, valued and encouraged to participate in their children's education and, by using the school's new portal, were becoming more actively involved. The parents were well informed of general school matters and of matters that related specifically to their children's education. They valued their children's progress reports and follow-up meetings, but, other than in Kindergarten, these did not identify targets for improvement. Parents appreciated the school's links with universities and with companies that provided some work experience; some parents also provided such opportunities. However, parents believed these links could be extended. Although parents were regularly

consulted, they did not feel they were yet fully involved in decision-making. They were not all aware of the recently established School Advisory Board with parental and student involvement.

Governance at the school was good. The Chairman's vision was for the school to become outstanding. He provided very effective strategic direction and guidance, and was supported well by experienced governors and the Principal. The board was responsible for significant achievements and was regularly involved in the evaluation of teachers and in the self-evaluation of school. It had also recently established a broader School Advisory Board to extend parental involvement and introduce representatives from students, but not teachers.

Management at the school was acceptable and the school ran smoothly. Teachers were deployed well, although a minority did not have recognised teaching certification. The turnover of teachers this year was very high and was preventing sufficient consistency in teaching that the school had worked hard to introduce. Parents were concerned about the effect this was having on their children's education. The school had already taken steps to improve recruitment and retention. Stimulating learning environments were provided throughout the school. However, this was not always the case in some areas used by older students, and some good facilities were also not always used to their potential. Facilities included the spacious field, swimming pools, large gymnasium and modern IT suite. The school had no lift and this disadvantaged students with limited physical mobility.

[View judgements](#)

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	39	8%
	Last year	62	18%
Teachers	20		38%
Students	9		10%

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

Only a few parents and a minority of students and teachers completed the survey. There were significantly fewer responses from the parents compared to previous inspections. Most parents believed that their children were making good progress in English, mathematics and science, but only a majority thought it was good in Islamic Education and Arabic. Almost all parents believed that students were respected and valued at the school and that their children enjoyed school; most students agreed with this. Most parents were also generally satisfied with the quality of education the school provided and that the school delivered well on its promise regarding the curriculum. However, only a minority agreed that the school offered a sufficiently wide range of elective courses that their children could choose from. This was also reflected by the students. Most parents believed that meetings and reports on their children were useful and regular. The majority felt that school leaders listened to their opinions, but only a minority believed that they were involved in decision-making. Most teachers felt that school leaders listened to their opinions. Most comments received from teachers supported the improvements that had been introduced.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:

inspection@khda.gov.ae

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