

INSPECTION REPORT

Greenwood International School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Greenwood International School

Location	Al Muhaisnah
Type of school	Private
Website	www.greenwood.sch.ae
Telephone	04-2888000
Address	Al Muhaisinah 1. P.O.Box 79595 Dubai U.A.E
Principal	Rashida M Badri, رشيدة بدري
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / KG 1-Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	991
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	793 (80%)
Date of the inspection	13th to 15th January 2014

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The context of the school

Greenwood International School is situated in Al Muhaisnah. Students attend in Kindergarten through Grade 12. Classes were mixed in KG through to Grade 4. Students in Grades 5 through to Grade 12 were separated by gender. The school had 991 students on the roll of which about 80 percent were Emirati. Others came from other Arab countries, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The school followed a US curriculum aligned with Florida and US Common Core standards. Most students chose to take external examinations such as the SAT and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). All students were required to take the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. This was the second year of school participation in this testing programme.

The staff consisted of seventy-four full time teachers supported by nineteen classroom assistants in all kindergarten classrooms and in some additional classrooms. Almost all teachers held a first degree and several held advanced degrees. Eighteen teachers held teacher qualifications. There was a large administration and support team. Approximately twenty-two students, or 2 percent of the school, had been identified as having some form of special educational need and the school had initiated a new programme of support for these students.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- Good leadership team who set a clear direction and who had good capacity to plan for improvement.
- Outstanding student understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness, from KG through to Grade 12;
- Outstanding progress in English by KG students;
- Outstanding personal and social development at the high school level including behaviour, attitudes, and work ethic.

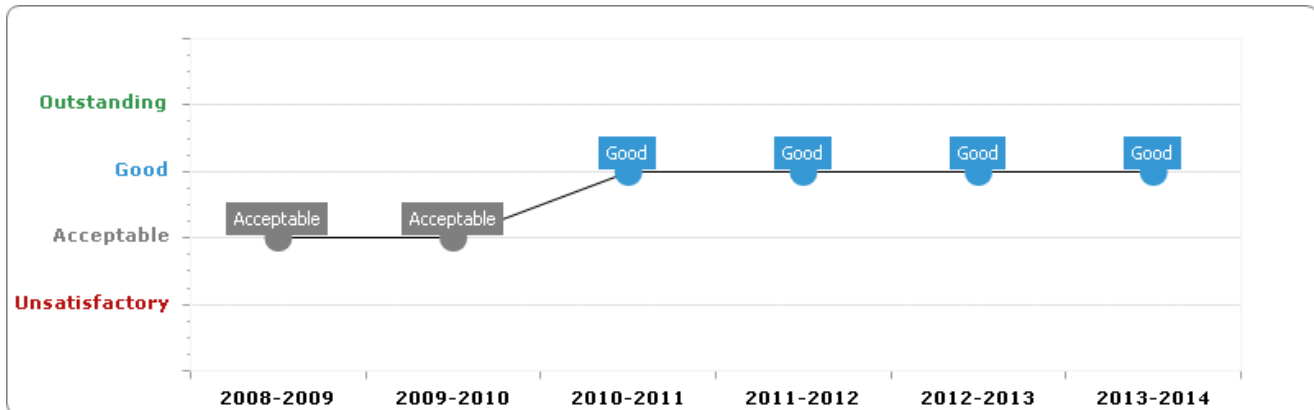
Recommendations

- Improve the performance managements that are in place across all subjects and phases to focus more sharply on the improvement of teaching;
- Improve teachers' skills in assessment analysis and in using the resultant data to modify their daily instruction in order to better meet the needs of all students;
- Develop and consistently promote higher order thinking strategies in all subjects and in all phases;
- Enhance the use of technology to support learning, particularly as a tool to challenge high and low achievers.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school had improved in attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic, but there had been a decline in Arabic and Science in Elementary, and mathematics in Middle.
- There had been significant progress in the use of assessment data across all phases to identify trends. The school had begun to benchmark performance against international standards and had used the analysis of data to improve curriculum.
- The school had provided students with access to quality guidance and internship opportunities for exploration of career fields. There continued to be few curriculum choices available for students but extra-curricular choices remained rich.
- The school had engaged an external provider to improve the SEN programme. There was extensive inclusion of students with SEN in the mainstream lessons. Teachers' skills in differentiation to meet the needs of all learners had not been sufficiently developed across all subjects and all grades.
- Students had been provided with numerous opportunities for leadership throughout the school.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
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	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	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	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

In Islamic Education most students memorised short chapters of Qur'an. They understood the Islamic behaviour requirements such as respect for others. In Arabic as a first language, attainment was acceptable across all phases. Listening skills were strongest and speaking skills were limited. Students used dialect rather than standard Arabic. Students in Middle and High read familiar topics with accuracy, but this was weaker in Elementary. Writing skills were weak across all phases. In Arabic as an additional language, listening was the strongest skill for the majority of students in all phases. Most were able to use familiar Arabic greetings and phrases confidently and attained above expectations in Elementary. Most students could read pre-learned simple sentences and phrases. Writing skills were limited for most students. In English, attainment was good across all phases. Students were confident in listening, speaking and writing and used English whenever possible. In mathematics, students used number and shape in a variety of ways and demonstrated strong numeracy skills. Elementary students calculated well, while older students worked proficiently with functions and application of formulae. Science attainment was good in all but Elementary. Students gained knowledge and demonstrated skills in general science, health, earth science, biology, chemistry and physics.

In Islamic Education, the majority of the students in Elementary and Middle made good progress across most aspects of the subject. Most students in high school made acceptable progress in exploring a number of issues and problems from Islam's perspective. In Arabic as a first language, progress was good in listening and acceptable in reading and acquiring vocabulary. Progress in developing independent writing skills was limited. In Arabic as an additional language, the majority in Elementary and Middle were developing a good range of vocabulary. Progress in listening was strong and significantly weaker in reading and writing, especially in high school. In English, students developed and progressed sufficiently to learn effectively in other content areas. In mathematics, younger students had strong numeracy skills and could talk about sets while elementary students were beginning to develop problem-solving skills. In Middle and High, students were gaining strength in their abilities to apply mathematics to real world situations. In science, students made expected progress and some demonstrated good independent discovery skills.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of learning skills was good in all phases except middle school, where it was acceptable. When given the opportunity to explore and be responsible for their learning, students were active learners and highly motivated to learn and improve. Students without those opportunities or encouragement tended to be more passive learners, and were less clear as to the purpose of what they were to learn. Across all

phases, students collaborated well with their peers and were able to complete tasks in groups. Some groups of students could explain what they were learning and a few were able to connect that learning to real world situations. Young students in KG used ICT to practice forming numerals or letters, and for matching, while some older students used ICT in a variety of ways, including the development of research skills.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility was good in KG, elementary, and middle phases, and outstanding in the high school. The relationships between students within and across phases were strong with students serving as assistants and buddies to younger students. Students with special educational needs (SEN) were welcomed and made to feel a part of the school. Students demonstrated an understanding of and commitment to healthy living. School attendance was good. Students exhibited responsible and respectful behaviour throughout the school.

Students had an excellent understanding of how Islamic values influence contemporary societies and of the current problems that face the Islamic world. They respected the heritage and values of the UAE. They had an excellent awareness of their culture and the cultures of others. They could explain in detail how they integrated their knowledge of Islam and understanding of UAE values into their everyday behaviour and through activities such as dramatic performances for their peers as well as involvement in relevant community events.

Community and environmental responsibility was outstanding. The student council had a strong influence on deciding activities related to social and personal development. Students participated across all phases in a wide range of environmental activities such as how to increase sustainability through recycling and, externally, in community projects such as planting trees and water conservation. They worked alongside a number of projects within and around Dubai and internationally. They had a positive work ethic, took the initiative to create the ideas, and enjoyed developing them further.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was good, although it varied across all grades and phases. Teachers throughout the school had good subject knowledge and were able to help students to develop their understanding. KG teachers used a variety of strategies that matched the interests and abilities of young learners. Lessons across the school were well-planned. Many included tasks that motivated and interested students. The

classroom environments were friendly and inviting, and students felt comfortable working with their classmates and interacting with teachers. Some, but not all, teachers asked open-response questions that caused students to think about the subject and consider how it might be connected to what they already knew. Early steps were made to develop students' research skills, aiding in the development of their ability to think critically. The use of ICT was gradually expanding, and students in both the lab and classroom benefited from this tool. Effective teaching in enrichment subjects such as art, French and PE contributed positively to developing a well-rounded education.

Assessment was good in KG and acceptable elsewhere. The school made significant progress in adopting systems of assessment to ensure an accurate record of student attainment and progress, and to match these results against the expected international benchmarks. The establishment of these systems was beginning to record a more accurate pattern of progress and assessment was beginning to have an influence on curriculum. At the classroom level, assessment was strong in the KG where continuous assessment took place daily. Teachers measured skill and content acquisition and had a strong understanding of the strengths of each child. A few teachers of older students had a similar understanding of students' needs, and gave consistent and helpful oral feedback to students or groups of students as they worked. The use of assessment to guide students' written work was not yet developed.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good. The school provided a broad, balanced curriculum that lent itself well to vertical planning. The school's thorough and systematic review of the curriculum had uncovered skills and knowledge gaps which were being addressed. Curriculum leaders were involved in planning for continuity and progression across the school. There were insufficient opportunities for students to develop speaking and presentation skills in Arabic and Islamic Education. The school provided many opportunities for students to extend their English skills through presentations. There were ample resources, including ICT, to support the curriculum although not all teachers made use of them. Significant work had been done to generate cross-curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular academic opportunities, including many that connected the students and larger community.

Curriculum design was acceptable but teachers were not sufficiently skilled in adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of different groups of students. The school had made a provision for coursework such as music and arts, and students had requested an expansion of this type of learning and assessment. The school

curriculum included ICT as a required course. This helped to link different aspects of the curriculum. French was provided in the lower grades.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety procedures were outstanding. The school was secure. The facilities were clean and well cared for. The school nurse kept up-to-date records that were readily accessible. Child protection procedures were in place. An emphasis on healthy living was promoted through posters and displays, and seen in the curriculum and activities of the students. Arrivals and departures of students were well planned and orderly. Supervision of students was well executed with ample staff throughout the building.

The quality of support for students was good. Relationships between teachers and students were respectful and cordial. Behaviour was well managed. Teachers knew their students very well and provided support for students as needed. The school had made arrangements for the identification of students with special needs and was beginning to include them in the classroom. However, teachers' skills in meeting the needs of all learners were under-developed and targeted for improvement by the school. There was a good system of monitoring student progress based on internal benchmarks.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was good. School leaders had established robust systems to enable the school to continue to improve. Leaders had begun to analyse and evaluate internal and external assessment data to improve programmes. There was a strong and clear shared vision, and an effective distribution of the responsibilities. The management systems within each phase of the school were strong. Senior leaders had high expectations for collaborative planning among all administrative team members, leading to consistency and logical development in the curriculum. Leaders demonstrated a solid understanding of the developmental and academic needs of their students. As a result, the school was welcoming to students of all ages from KG to Grade 12. The overall climate of the school was focused on student learning and celebration of students' achievements.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school had a generally accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. It had begun to use assessment data to analyse its curriculum and programmes, but it had not focused sufficiently on the quality of teaching. Nearly all phase leaders were knowledgeable about strengths and weaknesses in their areas. While performance arrangements were in place, these were

not effective enough in achieving consistently high quality teaching. Leaders planned to train teachers to meet the needs of all students through differentiation. The school had begun to use international data to evaluate its curriculum and had made changes to improve learning, as for example, the timing of the teaching of trigonometry to prepare students better for physics.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. There were good two-way communications between the school and the parents through which concerns of any type could be easily shared. Surveys were carried out periodically to enable parents to share their opinions on school matters. The parents' council enabled parent representatives to contribute to decision making, although not all parents were aware of its function. The school had improved its channels of communication through its website with the development of the parent and student portals. Many community links, in which parents were often included, enhanced the curriculum. Links with external agencies, such as local banks and businesses were used to support the school's vision.

Governance was acceptable, although there were a number of weaknesses. The governing board consisted of the owner and two members, with no formal involvement of parents. The board monitored the school's actions once yearly, but had no direct or formal role in monitoring the school's performance or planning school improvements other than those related to facilities.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources was good. The school was well-managed and located in a modern, clean, and safe facility. There were inviting and well-maintained common areas including an auditorium for students to plan and carry out weekly performances, a small science lab for KG, good computer resources, and good indoor activity areas for safe experiential learning in KG. Classrooms were well-resourced and support staff were well-deployed to support students.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of support for students with special educational needs had improved since the last inspection but the outcomes of the provision remained only acceptable. The school monitored the learning of students with SEN against benchmarks and had identified the need for teachers to improve their skills in providing differentiated teaching. However, at the time of the inspection, training had not begun. The staff and students were welcoming and the school was inclusive of students with special needs but not all adults were sufficiently skilled to promote good learning outcomes.

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

The quality of teaching was inconsistent, but stronger in the High School. Almost all teachers had secure subject knowledge but limited understanding of how students learn languages best, especially in Elementary. Lesson plans were in place but not always followed. A sufficient range of teaching resources was available but not used effectively to enhance students' learning. Lessons in too many classes were teacher-dominated with too much teacher talk. Consequently, not all the language skills have developed at the same level. Lesson objectives in the majority of lessons were broad. In a few lessons, teachers used open-ended questions effectively. Low expectations with limited differentiation were the main weaknesses with limited opportunities for students to be independent learners, use ICT or develop their critical thinking.

The school was compliant with KHDA time requirements. The curriculum had some cross-curricular links with other subjects e.g. Islamic Education and social studies. There were some planned enrichment activities to support learning but this was inconsistent across all grades. The curriculum, however, was mostly driven by the content of the textbooks. Appropriate levels of challenge were lacking in some instances. Students' feedback was not taken into account when reviewing the curriculum in order to meet their needs. With insufficient opportunities for speaking, many students found using the Modern Standard Arabic challenging.

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	102	20%
	Last year	147	33%
Teachers	72		92%
Students	102		91%

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

Only a fifth of the parents responded to their survey. Almost all teachers and students responded to their surveys. Parents were very satisfied with all aspects of the school. They felt that it was a warm and welcoming community, where children were safe. Parents believed that their children were making good progress in English and Islamic Education, Mathematics and Science. Fewer believed that their children were making good progress in Arabic. They thought that their children enjoyed life at school and that the teachers provided a good quality education. They said that teachers' comments and suggestions helped their children to improve. Parents valued the wide range of subjects and activities that their children could choose from and most said that their children found the work across subjects interesting and challenging. Almost all agreed that the school was well led and most agreed that leaders listened to their opinions about the school.

Teachers and students were largely positive about aspects of the school, although teachers tended to respond more positively than students. All teachers and students were satisfied with the overall quality of the education they received. They considered that behaviour was good, that all children were treated fairly and that the school dealt appropriately with any incidents of bullying. Students thought they were doing well in their subjects and that teachers' comments helped them to improve. However, a small number of students responded positively about their progress in mathematics. A minority of students considered that the range of subjects on offer was not wide enough. Only half the teachers said that the school leaders had discussed with them the students' results in international assessments.

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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