

INSPECTION REPORT

Grammar School

Report published in April, 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Grammar School

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.grammarschooldubai.com
Telephone	04-2824822
Address	P O Box 11230, Dubai
Principal	Dr. Patricia D'Cruz
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Year Groups	3-17 / Foundation Stage 1- Year 12 / KG 1-Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1172
Largest nationality group of students	Pakistani
Number of Emirati students	27 (2%)
Date of the inspection	24th to 27th March 2014

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The context of the school

The Grammar School is a private school located in Al Garhoud. At the time of inspection, 1172 girls and boys were enrolled. Nearly half of the students were in the primary phase. The school delivered a UK-style curriculum across four phases, Foundation Stage to post-16. The school had a wide range of nationalities with the majority coming from Pakistani and Indian families in Dubai and other nearby emirates. About two per cent of the students were Emirati. Students were grouped in 40 classes. Students were entered for International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and/or GCSE at the end of the secondary phase and GCE Advanced Studies Level (AS) examinations at the end of the post-16 phase.

There were 60 full-time teachers, including the senior leadership team. The teachers in the school had a range of academic and teaching qualifications. Approximately a third of the teachers had specific teaching qualifications suitable to their deployment. Almost half of the teachers were newly appointed for the 2013-14 academic year; teacher turnover remained a significant challenge at the school. Approximately three per cent of students had been identified by the school as having some form of special educational need (SEN).

The Grammar School was inspected in March 2012 by Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) and was found to be providing an unsatisfactory quality of education overall. Subsequently, DSIB completed three Follow-Through Inspections of the school between 2012 and 2013. During the third Follow-Through Inspection the school was judged to have addressed all the recommendations from the full inspection of 2012. The inspection of March 2014 reviewed all aspects of the work of the school.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The response of the school to the recommendations from the last inspection, including initiatives at an early stage of development, such as distributed leadership and staff professional development;
- The specialist in-class support of students with SEN.

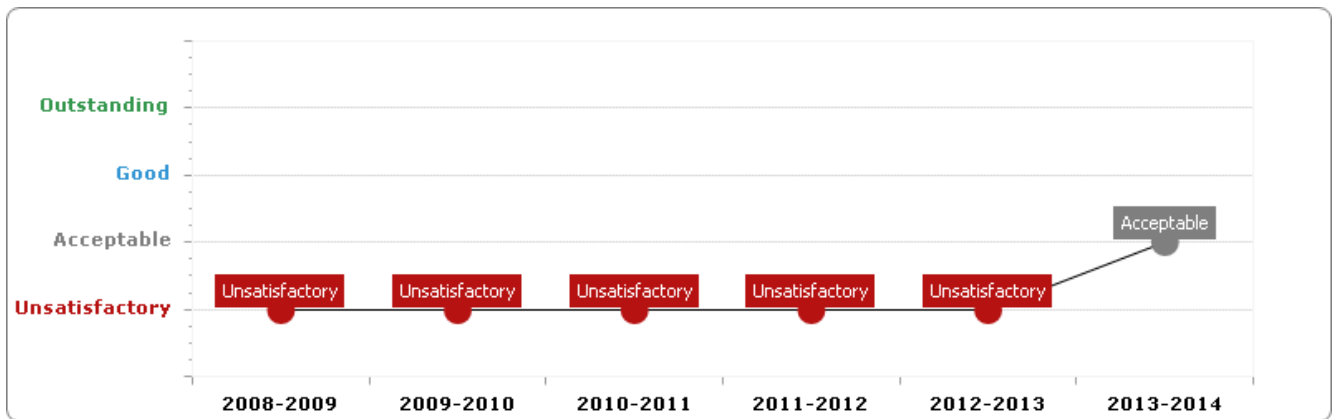
Recommendations

- In order to improve teaching and learning, especially in Arabic as an additional language:
 - further develop the consistency and accuracy in the monitoring of classroom practice to link it more closely to the quality of students' learning outcomes;
 - raise progress levels in all key subjects.
- Develop assessment processes in lessons and the use of assessment data to inform lesson planning, teaching and modification of the curriculum to meet the needs of all students.
- Strengthen planning across all subject and curriculum areas to:
 - develop students' enquiry skills and their independence in learning, across the curriculum;
 - provide consistent and sufficiently detailed guidance on teaching and learning approaches to enable all teachers to match challenge to the individual needs of all students.
- Improve the consistency and quality of non-specialist support for students with SEN in lessons throughout the school.
- Improve the levels of support for those students at an early stage of learning English, especially in Foundation Stage and Primary, including the development of literacy skills across the curriculum.

Progress since the last inspection

- With the exception of Arabic as an additional language, attainment and progress in other key subjects was now acceptable.
- The quality of teaching, learning skills and assessment had improved in most year groups.
- The quality of the curriculum had been improved.
- Leadership had been re-structured, was more distributive and was beginning to have a more direct impact on the standards of learning.

Trend of overall performance



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	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	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Personal responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was acceptable in all subjects and across all phases, except for Arabic as an additional language where it was unsatisfactory. In Islamic Education, most students memorized and could recite the Qu'ranic verses and Hadeeths they studied, but their understanding of the meaning of these verses was limited. In Arabic as a first language, students had appropriate listening and reading comprehension but only a minority could write at length. They showed adequate understanding of language styles and grammatical structures and often used Arabic dialects in speaking. The majority of students of Arabic as an additional language demonstrated unsatisfactory listening, speaking and reading skills. In English, Foundation Stage children attained levels expected for their age, practising speaking in daily routines. Students strengthened their attainment as they moved through the school and became more confident and articulate speakers, readers and writers. In mathematics, children in the Foundation Stage counted, ordered, read and wrote numbers up to 20, while primary students confidently calculated and used number and data. Older students simplified and manipulated algebra competently to solve problems and apply formulae. Students' investigative skills were underdeveloped. Girls mostly outperformed boys. In science, students acquired knowledge, but did not conduct investigations, test predictions or suggest explanations with sufficient regularity.

The quality of students' progress was identical to their attainment. In Islamic Education, students made adequate progress in understanding Islamic manners and daily etiquette, and in exploring worship acts and the teachings of Islam on peace and human rights. They recited new verses correctly but without clear understanding of the words. In Arabic, students made adequate progress in understanding texts and using words in suitable contexts but demonstrated limited progress in writing extensively. They showed adequate gains in understanding grammatical expressions and parts of speech but had limited skills in applying them. In English, Foundation Stage children responded well in the rich language environment. Students' progress in primary and secondary phases built on skills already developed in speaking and listening, but only a minority of students made good progress in writing. In mathematics, students' progress showed positive trends over time. The use of practical skills enabled students to make steady progress in geometry, and their confidence and competence when handling data at all levels had improved. In science, students in all phases made acceptable progress in acquiring scientific knowledge but they had too few opportunities for experimentation and hence their understanding of scientific concepts and independent enquiry was weaker.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Learning skills were acceptable in all phases. Students were keen to learn and collaborated well with each other when working in groups. Most students were conscientious and were prepared to work hard. When

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given the opportunity, as in science lessons, they wanted to take responsibility for their learning. Most students were anxious to do well and wanted to know how they could improve. In mathematics lessons, target-setting helped give them that focus. Some students were over-reliant on teachers for information rather than thinking for themselves and making links with real-life contexts. This aspect of independent learning had not been sufficiently embedded as an approach to learning. In English lessons, senior students engaged in discussions, promoting their own ideas with confidence. In most lessons, research and enquiry skills were underdeveloped because of the limited opportunities to use information and communications technology (ICT). The mutual support amongst students was an emerging strength.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

All aspects of students' personal and social development were acceptable. In lessons, students showed respect for their teachers and co-operated with each other, showing positive attitudes to work. They behaved well in and around school taking responsibility when given the opportunities. Most students enjoyed acceptable relationships with their teachers and staff, and adopted healthy life styles; however, younger students occasionally made unhealthy food choices. Attendance was acceptable in the most recent term, but a few students arrived late to the morning assembly. Students' knowledge of the Emirati culture, traditions and history was age-appropriate; students in the primary phase had above expected knowledge of other cultures. Older students' global awareness and knowledge of the cultures of their non-Emirati friends were acceptable. The Student Council was active and allowed the students' voice to be heard. Students assumed responsibilities as prefects and team members, and helped with discipline. Their links with the local community were possible through participation in a limited number of events and trips. Students enjoyed work and took part in organising assemblies and school events. They had adequate awareness of environmental issues through recycling, and conserving water and electricity.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was acceptable in all phases. Teachers knew their subjects well, with the exception of Arabic as a second language, where incorrect grammar was taught at times. The positive relationship established with children in the Foundation Stage promoted enthusiasm and participation. Many lessons were instructional and knowledge based. This effectively promoted the acquisition of facts but impeded opportunities for independent enquiry and development of critical thinking. Teachers used ICT well to act as a stimulus for discussion but did not show students clearly enough how to structure written work. Lesson

objectives were displayed but were too complicated and rarely reviewed to check for understanding. Practical, investigative work was rarely used in science and mathematics lessons. This was due to limited resources but also insufficient variety in teaching strategies. Teachers' questioning skills were variable. Questioning frequently asked students to recall only factual knowledge and allowed insufficient opportunity for students to develop more extended answers. Teachers produced detailed lesson plans; these focused on meeting the needs of different groups of students but this was not always translated into actual classroom practice.

Assessment was acceptable in all phases, although the use of data to plan accurately and enhance learning was inconsistent in all phases. Most leaders and co-ordinators made limited analysis of data produced. A clear tracking system had been implemented to monitor various groups' performance. In better lessons, information was used to focus on individual students' strengths and weaknesses, of which teachers had a sound understanding. Teachers then used a range of questioning techniques in lessons to enhance their view of students' attainment and progress, rather than simple checking knowledge acquisition. Students' work in books and portfolios was inconsistently marked; constructive and diagnostic comments were intermittent.

[View judgements](#)

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

Across all phases, the quality of the curriculum was acceptable. It was reasonably broad and balanced, reflected main features of the National Curriculum for England and was now also compliant with the Ministry of Education requirements. However, challenge in Arabic as an additional language, investigative and enquiry skills in science, and non-key subjects were inadequately planned. There was also insufficient guidance on planning effective teaching and learning in each subject. The school did not always make best use of available time and the timetable was not sufficiently balanced. There was no meaningful ICT provision in Foundation Stage and Year 1. Arrangements for transition between different phases and stages / Grades or Year Groups' education were adequate and included planning for progression, personal development and careers guidance. The school regularly and effectively conducted reviews of the curriculum which often led to significant improvements and development. Cross-curricular links, opportunities for critical thinking and independent learning were underdeveloped though sometimes they were planned for. There was extensive enrichment in the primary phase, although it was not sufficiently related to learning. A similar programme for the older students was less effective mainly because participation was optional.

The curriculum design across all phases was acceptable. Modifications were made that partly met students' different needs and abilities, including students' special educational needs. Other students' needs and talents were also addressed through the activities programme if students participated.

The needs of early English language learners in primary were beginning to be addressed. Progression from secondary to full A-Level was very limited.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for students' health and safety was acceptable. Clear fire evacuation procedures were rehearsed regularly and had been monitored by Civil Defence. Maintenance records for the premises were current. Students were supervised throughout the day and transport arrangements were monitored. The school building and resources were in reasonable condition and catered adequately for students' educational needs. Students had regular health checks but their specific medical needs were not widely understood by all teachers. Records of incidents were up-to-date; medicines and other chemicals were stored securely. Healthy living was promoted through events such as a 'Health and Hygiene Day' but was not regularly promoted or systematically built into the curriculum. Child protection arrangements were in place and training for teachers was given annually.

The support for students was acceptable. The school had appropriate procedures for the identification of students with SEN and was inclusive. The quality of support was good when provided by the SEN co-ordinator, but inconsistent when it was the responsibility of the class teacher or the class assistant. The progress of some students with SEN was variable but over time they made acceptable progress. Individual withdrawal support was not provided for students who were in the early stages of developing their English language skills; therefore, they had difficulty in accessing the curriculum initially. Staff-student relationships were acceptable and respectful, and almost all staff managed behaviour effectively. There were clear procedures for managing attendance and punctuality. The school adequately monitored the well-being and personal development of students.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. Senior staff and middle managers were competent and committed. The senior management team had acted on the recommendations of the previous inspections and showed commitment to school improvement. Distributive leadership was beginning to empower staff especially those involved in middle management. Their sense of direction was evidenced in the improvements to attainment and progress in several key subjects and the quality of teaching and learning. Collectively, they demonstrated a sufficient capacity to secure further improvements. Leaders of the school were not complacent about the need for further improvement. However, there was inconsistent use of student data

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to enhance teaching and learning, and to inform school evaluation and improvement. All staff had job descriptions and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. These had led to improvements through the school's capacity to respond to the recommendations in the previous inspection report. The Principal and senior staff knew the strengths of the school and had identified the main areas of development, particularly recognising the need for an emphasis on developing staff and improving teaching and learning. The school showed a commitment to developing a culture of self-evaluation but this was yet to be embedded at all levels. The monitoring of teaching and learning in the classroom had contributed to improvements in many classrooms but the good practice which existed was not shared widely. Teachers had been involved in developing the subject action plans that contributed to the overall school improvement plan; this in turn provided a basis for further improvement. Stakeholder engagement was adequately promoted through the use of surveys.

The partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Most parents were supportive of the school and spoke highly of the high standards of care for the students, and general progress that the school had made over the last year. Parents were happy with the school's provision of information on student attainment and progress in key subjects; termly reports were discussed and written comments held on file. Links with the community were developing and the informal parents' gatherings discussed aspects of the school and suggested areas for improvement.

Governance was unsatisfactory. The school had established a governing body by invitation: members included parents. The governing body had met with the senior leaders on a number of occasions but their support for the school was at an early stage and had a modest impact on its overall performance. It lacked the necessary rigour for holding the school accountable for its performance and the strategic thinking to establish a more consistent level of experienced and effectively deployed staff.

The quality of staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. The school had difficulties retaining high quality teachers and was striving to develop affordable strategies to improve teacher retention. Some improvements had been made to the premises since the last inspection. In a few year groups, teaching rooms were too small for the size of the classes, especially in senior years. There had been an improvement in ICT resources since the previous inspection, but outside the Foundation Stage, resources for teaching and learning were not always of sufficiently high quantity and quality.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

In Arabic as a first language and English language, attainment in reading was acceptable and most Emirati students could read and understand text at their appropriate level in primary and secondary. Listening skills were the strongest element in all phases. Mathematics attainment was acceptable overall although few strategies were being used to predict or check answers. Attainment in science was acceptable and improving in older age groups due to more practical demonstrations. Acceptable progress was achieved over time in English grammatical knowledge and application. In the Foundation Stage, the development of science skills and understanding was acceptable, but Emirati children rarely participated in hands-on learning activities. The students were generally punctual and had positive attitudes to their studies. They were well-behaved and engaged fully in activities with their peers. The curriculum made references to cultural and heritage issues e.g. mosques, landmarks, customs, national celebrations. The school made acceptable provision for supporting students in their preparation for final transition to post school employment or study.

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

The provision for students with SEN was acceptable. The school had recently introduced screening on entry to the school to establish individual needs. The appointment of a qualified special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) had made a significant impact on the quality of support for these students. As part of provision, all students had an appropriate individual education plan (IEP) produced by the SENCO. Teachers were provided with learning plans for individual students but their use by teachers in lessons was variable. When the SENCO supported students in the classroom, their progress was generally good because it was well targeted, the working relationship was positive and the children were challenged to think for themselves. There was a process for monitoring the progress of the students. This was completed by the SENCO but was used minimally by the teachers. However, it did provide information for parents and provided a regular channel of communication. The school had not yet reached the stage of adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of students with SEN. For example, there were no separate lessons to address particular difficulties. There were a number of students who were new to English and the school had not yet been successful in establishing a programme to meet their needs. The presence of classroom assistants in Years 1 to 4 did not support learning for these children. The identification of gifted and talented students was in its early stages.

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

In the primary phase, teachers planned and delivered their lessons acceptably. They had suitable classroom management skills and gave students useful guidance about completing their classwork. Teachers provided a few additional materials such as flash cards and dolls. They interacted positively with students and used praise for motivation. Teachers encouraged students to read and provided adequate opportunities to apply knowledge in suitable situations. There were also opportunities to review prior knowledge and to check students' understanding through questioning, monitoring and the use of differentiated worksheets. However, collaborative group work was not a feature in most lessons. In secondary, teachers had appropriate subject knowledge and effective classroom management skills but they often used Arabic dialects instead of Standard Arabic and relied heavily on textbooks. Teachers provided opportunities for students to understand the texts and use the new words in sentences. They encouraged students' participation but, in a minority of lessons, the teacher-dominated approach did not provide students with sufficient engagement and independence of learning. In post-16 teachers had lesson plans that included objectives and activities but which lacked the steps to develop speaking and writing. Teachers across the phases did not use ICT in lessons.

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	107	52%
	Last year	The school was part of the Follow - Through inspection cycle in 2012 - 2013	
Teachers	6		13%
Students	56		29%

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

Only a small number of teachers and parents responded to the survey. Most parents and students felt that they were making good progress in English, mathematics and science. In general, parents felt that their children enjoyed life at school. Most parents and those teachers who responded, felt that the behaviour of students was good. The majority of parents and students believed that the school dealt well with incidents of bullying. However, a quarter of students surveyed felt they were not fairly treated around the school. A fifth of students disagreed that teachers were skilled and well qualified. Two thirds of the students and parents agreed that a wide range of technology tools were used to support students' learning. Over a quarter of the students could not agree that the school leaders listened to their opinions about the school. Most parents believed the school was well led.

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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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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