

INSPECTION REPORT

Emirates International School (Meadows)

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Emirates International School (Meadows)

Location	Emirates Hills
Type of school	Private
Website	www.eischools.ae
Telephone	04 362 9009
Address	P O Box 120118, Dubai
Principal	Leonard Murphy, Carmel Platt
Curriculum	IB
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-19 / Kindergarten 1-Grade 13
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1606
Largest nationality group of students	Arab
Number of Emirati students	22 (less than 2%)
Date of the inspection	3rd to 6th March 2014

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The context of the school

Emirates International School - Meadows is located in the Meadows area of Emirates Hills. It offers education to boys and girls aged three to 19 years, from Foundation Stage to Grade 13. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,606 students on roll. Over 80 nationalities were represented. Less than two per cent of the students were Emiratis.

The school followed the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum. The school had candidate status for the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP), for students aged three to 11 and the Middle Years Programme (MYP) for students aged 12 to 16 years. The school was authorised to teach the post-16 IB Diploma programme. At the time of the inspection, students took IGCSE courses (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) in the final two years of the secondary section followed by IBDP courses (International Baccalaureate Diploma) in the post-16 phase.

There were 152 teachers, all of whom had appropriate qualifications, and 25 teaching assistants. There were two Principals, one each for primary and high school phases.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- The strong implementation of the IB philosophy post-16, leading to outstanding outcomes for students in most subjects;
- The strong commitment across the school to reflective learning;
- The continuing improvement in the Foundation Stage and the primary and secondary phases;
- The strong and supportive relationships between staff and students;
- The highly productive relationships with parents and the community.

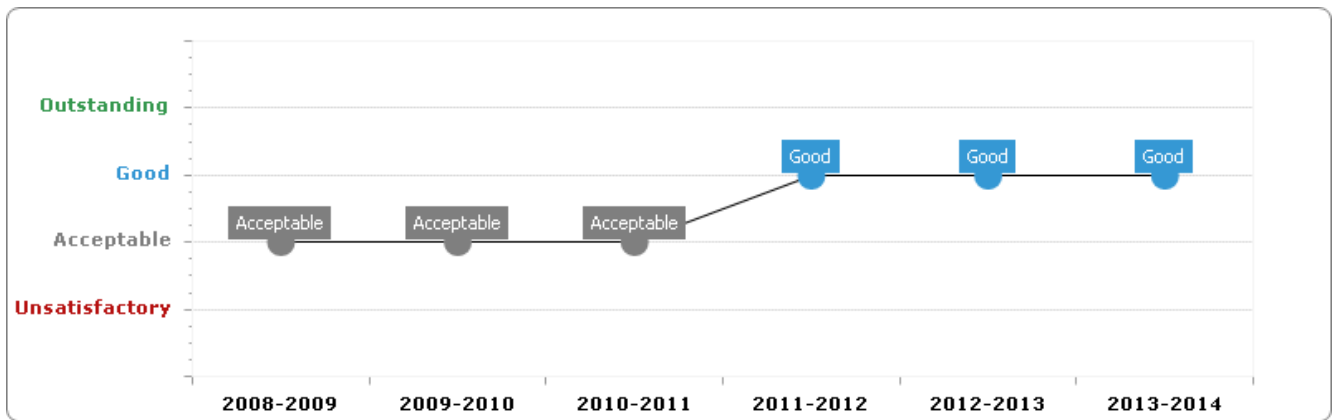
Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress in Arabic, particularly in writing and speaking, by raising expectations in lessons.
- Improve the attainment and progress in Islamic Education in the secondary and post-16 phases by:
 - providing more opportunities for students to learn independently, research information and use new technologies;
 - raising expectations in lessons.
- Ensure the learning needs of all students are met more systematically by:
 - making full use of assessment information to plan lessons;
 - maximising opportunities for reflection in lessons by students and teachers;
 - developing staff skills in evaluating and supporting teaching in the primary phase and the Foundation Stage.
- Ensure more accuracy and consistency in self-evaluation by adopting a more whole-school approach.
- Increase students' access to modern technologies.

Progress since the last inspection

- The improved attainment in Islamic Education in the primary phase;
- The good improvement in attainment and progress in English in the Foundation stage;
- The outstanding attainment and progress in mathematics in post-16 and the outstanding progress in the secondary phase;
- The outstanding community and environmental responsibility of post-16 students;
- The improved curriculum and assessment systems in the Foundation Stage;
- The outstanding quality of support in the primary phase.

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	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	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	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Assessment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[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	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in Islamic Education was good in the primary phase and acceptable elsewhere. Primary students had good knowledge and understanding of the various Islamic pillars, practice and values. They showed clear understanding of the life of Prophet and his companions, and the difference between examples of the Islamic practice such as Haj and Omrah. In the secondary and post-16 phases, attainment was less secure because many students struggled to understand and memorise the longer chapter of the Holy Qur'an they studied. Attainment in Arabic was acceptable. In Arabic as a first language, students' listening and reading skills were good. When speaking, most students did not express their ideas with sufficient confidence in standard Arabic. A significant minority of students could not write well at length. In Arabic as an additional language, primary students' listening and reading were good. Students could decode simple Arabic letters and pronounced familiar words reasonably accurately. However, writing and speaking were less competent. Attainment in English was good in most phases and it was outstanding in the post-16 phase. Speaking and listening skills were generally good; reading and writing were not quite as strong. The attainment of older students was outstanding, especially in handling complex ideas and presenting them to others. In mathematics, attainment was good in the Foundation Stage and primary phase, and outstanding in the upper phases. For example, Foundation Stage children could count and classify shapes; Grade 4 students used Venn diagrams to compare and contrast habitats; Grade 7 students solved one-step equations; post-16 students used technology to graph complex functions. Attainment in science was acceptable in the Foundation Stage, good in the primary and secondary phases, and outstanding post-16. In the Foundation Stage, children were able to make choices, exploring and describing how materials felt. Primary and secondary students had good enquiry skills. Such skills enabled post-16 students to design their own experiments in physics, chemistry, biology and environmental science.

The judgements for progress were exactly the same as for attainment, with one exception. Progress in primary Arabic as an additional language was good. In Islamic Education, primary students made good progress in their memorisation and recitation of short chapters of the Holy Qur'an. Progress was slower in the secondary phase as expectations were low and opportunities for independent learning were limited. In Arabic as a first language, students did not progress well in speaking and writing although their vocabulary and grammar were developing satisfactorily. In Arabic as an additional language, students made good progress in learning vocabulary but lacked confidence in using it when speaking and writing. Progress in English, while good for most students and outstanding for post-16, was sometimes too slow for the most able, especially in writing. Post-16 students, including those at the early stages of learning English, made excellent progress in speaking and slightly slower progress in writing. In mathematics, progress was good

in the first two phases and outstanding in the later phases progress was best in classes in which students had the opportunity to work in groups and at their own pace, and had time to reflect on their learning. In science progress was acceptable in the Foundation Stage, good in primary and secondary and outstanding at post-16. IGCSE and IB results in science illustrated students' improvement in recent years, especially because of the development of their enquiry skills and critical thinking.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of learning was good in most phases but outstanding in the post-16 phase. Students enjoyed learning and developed a responsible attitude towards their own learning as they went through the school. As a result, older students could evaluate and reflect on their work highly effectively to improve it further. Students discussed their learning and collaborated successfully. They applied their knowledge and understanding readily to the real world and made intelligent connections between different themes and topics. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) supported learning very effectively. Students in younger classes did not use ICT regularly because of a shortage of resources. As they moved through the school, students gradually developed the skills of finding things out for themselves. Older students, with more maturity and experience, were proficient independent learners and applied their critical thinking skills as an intrinsic part of their learning.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility was good in the Foundation Stage and the primary phase, and outstanding in the secondary and post-16 phases. Almost all students had a positive attitude to school. Teachers addressed minor challenging behaviour from Foundation Stage children and primary students through a new behaviour policy. Secondary and post-16 students were mature, self-disciplined, reflective thinkers. Relationships were respectful and senior students supported younger children very well. Students participated in many physical activities. The student council initiated healthy changes to the canteen menu. The school had improved attendance among younger students, so attendance overall was good and students were punctual.

Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness were good across all phases. The majority of senior students had a clear understanding of the impact of Islam on their life in Dubai. This was less apparent amongst younger students. Many older students had an excellent

understanding of UAE heritage and culture, acknowledging the characteristics of different populations within UAE. These students understood and reflected maturely on the rapid development of Dubai. This was less well developed for primary students. Students acknowledged their cultural differences, but saw themselves as citizens of the world. They were proud of their efforts to support the UAE's bid for Expo 2020.

Students' community and environmental responsibility was good in the Foundation stage and the primary and secondary phases. It was outstanding among post-16 students. Foundation Stage children contributed to the community of their classroom by willingly helping one another and their teachers. Many senior students mentored primary students in some subjects, and did so sensitively. Almost all displayed a strong work ethic. Some students from each phase had recently become Eco-prefects as part of the Eco-Schools Project. This was one of several school council initiatives that was beginning to extend students' awareness of matters beyond the curriculum. Students were very active in local and international community projects, as well as in inter-school events.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was good in most of the school; it was outstanding in the post-16 phase. Teachers had a good knowledge of their subject and understood how to make learning motivational for students. In the best lessons, teachers' expert knowledge ensured consistently high expectations of students of all abilities and optimised students' skills in an inspirational cross-curricular approach to learning. As a result, students made swift progress and had a clear vision of their own success. Mostly, teachers planned and managed lessons effectively so that students were clear about their objectives. Teachers interacted well with students and most were skilled in their use of questions to test students' understanding. Almost all lessons positively encouraged student's active participation. Most teachers adapted their methods so that students made good progress whatever their learning needs. The school had a strong focus on students developing the skills of enquiry, critical thinking and reflection. Teachers promoted these skills in most lessons, and this was an outstanding feature of the best teaching. There were few such opportunities given to students in Arabic or Islamic Education.

Assessment was acceptable in the Foundation Stage, good in the primary and secondary phases and outstanding in the post-16 phase. The school had further improved its thorough programme of assessment and review in all phases. Students throughout the school showed a reflective response to their own learning. Older students were adept at evaluating their progress towards academic and personal targets. Staff collected comprehensive information from assessments to record, track, analyse and monitor

students' attainment and progress, and to identify support needs. A range of well-considered online tools were used to good effect. Teachers had easy access to assessment information and knew their students' strengths and weaknesses. However, they did not all use this information effectively enough in lessons to meet the needs of all groups of students. When teachers assessed students' work in class, oral feedback helped students to know what their next steps should be. Constructive comments in the marking of books also helped students to improve their work but the quality of marking varied.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum quality was good in the Foundation Stage, and the primary and secondary phases; it was outstanding in the post-16 phase. The curriculum in each phase was based on International Baccalaureate principles and mapped against other international curricula. As well as an annual review, teachers met regularly to reflect and collaborate on ways to improve students' learning. Learning was being strengthened in the Foundation Stage and the primary phase through the PYP trans-disciplinary themes. The curriculum in the secondary phase had been mapped meticulously to identify interdisciplinary links and work on Theory of Knowledge in the post-16 phase also provided strong links. Opportunities for research and critical thinking were written into almost all unit plans. Learning was facilitated by ICT that was used as a matter of course in most classrooms in the middle and upper part of the school, less so in the early phases. There was a wide variety of co-curricular activities such as field trips, as well as extra-curricular activities and community links to further enrich the curriculum. The expectations of the curriculum for Arabic as a first language in the post-16 phase were below those of the Ministry of Education (MoE).

Curriculum design was good across the school. A process of on-going review in each phase ensured that the curriculum was modified as needed. Examples included the strengthening of science and social studies in Grade 3 units and the inclusion of environmental action as part of secondary humanities. Modifications to the curriculum had been made in all phases as a result of external professional development. Language development for students whose mother tongue was not English was a priority, particularly in the Foundation Stage. The identification of students with special educational needs and strategies to cater for their needs were well developed, particularly in the primary, secondary and post-16 phases. The school was in breach of MoE requirements by not ensuring that all secondary Arab students were timetabled to learn Arabic as a first language.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's provision for students' health and safety was outstanding in most phases, it was good in the secondary phase. Arrangements to ensure safety on school transport and on site were very well organised so students felt safe, although routine safety procedures were not fully followed in one instance in the secondary phase. Building repairs and maintenance were swiftly and efficiently dealt with. The premises and resources provided by the school were carefully modified for students with special educational needs. For example, there was wheelchair access from the car park to every part of the building. Comprehensive records were kept and evaluations of incidents were immediate and thorough. Healthy living was promoted effectively, with a good input from the school clinic. All staff and students were fully aware of the school's child protection procedures.

The quality of support was good in the Foundation Stage and outstanding elsewhere. Relationships between students and staff were excellent and were characterised by respect and trust. Teachers knew their students very well. Students' behaviour was managed extremely effectively, but this was not quite as consistent in the Foundation Stage. Rigorous new procedures had improved attendance and punctuality, though in the Foundation Stage attendance was lower than in the rest of school. This school was inclusive and the identification of students with special educational needs (SEN) was accurate and was shared with school staff. Provision and support for SEN was good in most subjects and enabled students to make rapid progress. However, it was weaker in Arabic and Islamic Education where teachers did not always have access to the students' individual education plans, so few changes were made to teaching to support individual students. Advice and support were excellent and were highly appreciated by students.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The leaders in school had a clear vision and were dedicated to improving the school at almost all levels. A new high school principal had been appointed, and he had carried forward the improvements from the previous leader. Equally, the primary school principal had secured progress over time in her area. Responsibilities were shared strategically in both sections, but improvement was sometimes hindered by the absence of an overarching role over the two schools. Despite this limiting factor, communication was good across the phases and staff and students had a clear sense of direction.

The school self-evaluation and planning for improvement were good. The school had a collegiate approach to self-evaluation. For example, middle managers were focused on their areas of development and knew

how to relate them to their improvement plans. In both primary and post-16 phases, an effective reporting system enabled the two senior leaders to monitor their priorities of improvement. However, the whole school analysis was more sporadic, leading to inaccuracies in evaluation, and hindering positive outcomes. Nevertheless, the school had made good progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous report. Senior leaders had developed a coaching programme to capitalise on their areas of excellence and share best practice.

Links with parents and the community were outstanding. Parents' involvement was very effective. They played a crucial part in the personal and academic development of their children. For example, they supported students during fund-raising events and careers day and parents trained their peers to participate in reading workshops. This year also saw the launch of a curriculum review team which involved parents and students in reviewing aspects of the curriculum. The school had also strong links with other schools in Dubai and internationally. The communication between the school, the parents and the community was going from strength to strength, although the school had recognised the need to improve its website. The reports on students' progress were regular, detailed and included clear next steps in learning.

Governance was good. It included an executive and an advisory board. Expert advice was sought out when necessary. For example, an external advisory committee had been consulted to review the Ministry of Education standards in Arabic and Islamic Education. They had also recently used these consultants specialising in effective teaching and learning to review the underperforming areas of the school in Arabic and Islamic Education. These extra levels of quality assurance sharpened their evaluation process and enabled them to measure the impact of the leadership team's strategies for improvement more closely. Although the governing board was seeking the views of parents through questionnaires, the boards still did not include any representation from the parents' committee. Parents sometimes felt their views were not always responded to.

The school's management, including staffing, facilities and resources, was good. Daily procedures and routines were dealt with effectively. There was a sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers but there were insufficient senior staff to support the observation of teaching and learning in the primary phase. The school did not ensure that the teaching assistants in the Foundation Stage had sufficient skills to fully support their teachers. The premises and resources were of good quality and provided students with a positive learning environment. In some areas though, students' access to 21st century technology was still limited.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

There were 22 Emirati students in the school with a small number of students in most grades. Their attainment was good for Islamic Education, Arabic and English and at an acceptable level for mathematics and science. Their personal and social skills were strong and their attendance and punctuality was good to outstanding. In lessons and over time, these students made good progress and their attainment was in line with other students. The few students with SEN received comprehensive support to ensure the curriculum and teaching met their needs well.

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

Students with special educational needs (SEN) were carefully and accurately identified by specialist teachers, using a range of appropriate methods. The identification of gifted and talented students was not as consistently secure. Parents were fully involved from the outset and had a voice in developing their children's individual education plans. These plans were well matched to students' learning needs and had realistic targets. They were used well by class teachers. Support within withdrawal groups was good and enabled students to develop the skills they most needed. Support in class, from school staff and 'shadow' teachers was more variable but good overall. In most lessons, teachers modified teaching and the curriculum well to support students' learning. This enabled students to make good progress in developing skills, knowledge and understanding. In the secondary phase, students assessed their own progress through a well-designed skills handbook, which gave them a sense of how well they were progressing. It also provided them with a sense of control over their learning. The progress of students with SEN was monitored carefully by specialist staff, as well as teaching staff and leaders. Progress was reviewed regularly with parents present if they wished. Provision for students with SEN was not as effective in Arabic and Islamic Education. Heads of department in these subjects had access to students' individual education plans but teachers rarely had them available to help them plan their lessons. Consequently, lessons were not often changed to help these students to participate fully.

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

The quality of teaching Arabic as a first language was inconsistent across the school. Teachers' strong subject knowledge allowed students to access the correct language and information. Lesson plans were generally well structured with clear objectives and steps to follow. In most lessons, the objectives were communicated clearly to students. However, in too many cases, they were not sufficiently focused on linguistic development. In the upper phases, teachers gave reasonable opportunities for students to work both independently and with others. These included a variety of activities that integrated the four skills of the language. Lessons were often too teacher-centred with fewer opportunities for students to use the language in a wide range of contexts. This was often the case in the primary phase. Teachers did not plan enough opportunities to engage all students through challenging questions. Teachers made some attempts to match work to students' abilities and learning needs but this was mostly based on a few different worksheets that did not always take students to their next stages of learning.

Although the school based its curriculum on the MoE standards, there was some inconsistency in quality across the phases. The school had reviewed the curriculum to better match the needs of the students, but its practical implementation in classrooms was not always successful. Secondary school teachers were more efficient in enriching learning with hands-on activities. In the primary phase, work was too strictly matched to the prescribed textbooks. In the post-16 phase, expectations were too low for students in their twelfth year of study. The school did not ensure that all secondary Arab students were timetabled to learn Arabic as a first language.

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	160	12%
	Last year	141	13%
Teachers	73		50%
Students	208		72%

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

Survey responses from all sections of the school were generally very positive, particularly those from teachers. Students felt they were making good progress in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science, and parents agreed with the last three. Both parents and students expressed high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching, the challenge and stimulation in lessons, feedback and assessment from teachers, the use of technology for learning and subject choices. Parents and students were not satisfied with students' progress in Arabic as a first language, although parents valued the teaching. Most stakeholders agreed that school leadership was effective and that they had a voice, although a few students commented on the perceived ineffectiveness of the student council. Parents and students were far less positive about how bullying was dealt with than teachers.

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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