

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Star International School - Umm Al Sheif

Report published in April 2014

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Star International School - Umm Al Sheif

Location	Umm Al Sheif
Type of school	Private
Website	www.starschoolummsheif.com
Telephone	04 348 3314
Address	P O Box 51008, Dubai
Principal	David Wilson
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-13 / Foundation Stage1-Year 9
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	701
Largest nationality group of Students	British
Number of Emirati students	7 (1%)
Date of the inspection	13th to 15th January 2014

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## The context of the school

Star International School is a private school located in Umm Al Sheif. It was founded five years ago. The school currently provides education for boys and girls, aged three to thirteen years, from the Foundation Stage 1 to Year 9. At the time of the inspection, there were 701 students on roll. This was an increase of 125 on the previous year, due in part to the addition of a further year group. Forty per cent of the students were from the UK and only seven students were Emirati. Most students spoke English as a first language. A total of 124 students were receiving support for their special educational needs.

The school followed the Early Years Foundation Stage and the English National Curriculum for English, mathematics and science. Islamic Education and Arabic, as a first and as an additional language, were also part of the core curriculum and the programmes of study followed the Ministry of Education requirements. French was mandatory up until the end of Year 9.

The school employed 64 teachers and 20 support staff to assist teaching. There were two members of staff for students with special educational needs. All of the teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. The majority of the teachers were employed mainly from the UK and around a third of all teachers were new to the school this year.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

### Key strengths

- A strong community ethos with close collaboration of all those responsible for students' learning;
- The outstanding attitudes and behaviour of all of the students;
- An outstanding curriculum in the Foundation Stage;
- Emphasis on and arrangements for the effective inclusion of students with special educational needs;
- Effective leadership which had sustained school improvement during a time of considerable change;
- Outstanding arrangements for health and safety in the school.

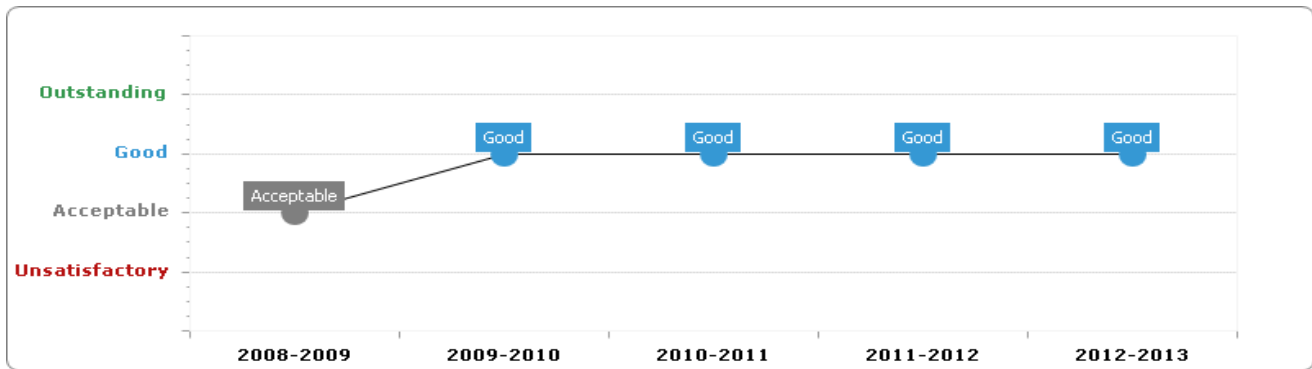
### Recommendations

- Enhance the Arabic and Islamic Education curricula further to ensure that activities are designed to meet the needs of all students in order to make good or better progress across all key skills.
- Develop a more equal partnership in the learning process between teachers and students so that greater opportunities are given for autonomous learning including the development of enquiry and research skills, critical thinking and the ability for self-assessment.
- Provide opportunities for students to use information communication technology (ICT) as a part of their classroom learning.
- Enhance current good practice by introducing a common assessment system across all phases, accessible to teachers and parents.
- Distribute the level of curriculum responsibility in Key Stage 3 more evenly and reduce the range of ages taught by the Islamic Education teachers.

## Progress since the last inspection

- There had been improvement to the standards of teaching and learning in Islamic Education and Arabic and some improvement to attainment.
- The effectiveness of assessment across the school had been improved. Teachers in all phases were using the data to modify curriculum planning in order to meet the needs of all groups of students.
- The effectiveness of the Achievement Centre in supporting children with special educational needs had been improved through the appointment of experienced staff and through their close partnership with class teachers, teaching assistants and parents.
- The stakeholder representation on the governing body had been broadened to include parents, senior leaders and a member with educational expertise.

## Trend of overall performance



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
<b>Islamic Education</b>			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>English</b>			
Attainment	Outstanding	Good	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Good	Good
<b>Mathematics</b>			
Attainment	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good
<b>Science</b>			
Attainment	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Quality of students' learning skills	Outstanding	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

### How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

### How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	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	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first and as an additional language. It was good in English, mathematics and science, although English was outstanding in the Foundation Stage. In Islamic Education, most students had a basic knowledge of prayers, values and etiquettes. However, their memorisation and recitation skills of the Holy Qur'an were below expectations. In Arabic as a first language, most students had acceptable speaking and listening skills while their creative and extended writing skills were less well developed. In Arabic as an additional language, most students had adequate speaking and listening skills; students could understand basic class instructions and were able to respond with simple words or phrases. Independent writing was underdeveloped. In English across all phases, students had strong skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Students in the Foundation stage had outstanding phonics skills. In mathematics, nearly all children achieved at the expected level and some of them exceeded it. The use of number was becoming a strength. Attainment was good in most of the different strands of science but the acquisition of science investigation skills was inconsistent particularly in the primary phase. Older boys in the primary phase had outperformed girls in science in the last two years.

Progress was acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first and as an additional language. It was good in English, mathematics and science. Progress in English in the Foundation Stage was outstanding. In Islamic Education, most students were improving their knowledge of key Islamic concepts and the life of Prophet Mohammed. Progress in improving their memorisation and recitation skills was slower. In Arabic, both as a first and as an additional language, progress in speaking, listening and reading was more rapid than in writing. In English, girls made better progress than boys. Progress in mathematics was strongest in the early primary years with girls outperforming the boys. Conversely, progress in science was strongest in Years 5, 6 and 8. Given their starting points, students with special education needs made good progress across the school. Emirati students and those identified as gifted and talented were less likely to make progress above expectations in the primary phase.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

Learning skills were outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good in the primary and secondary phases. The development of learning skills was a very strong feature of free-flow sessions in the Foundation Stage play areas. Throughout the school, students regularly worked together, providing mutual support and challenge when necessary. Students made good connections to prior learning and real-life situations. They were keen to answer questions posed by teachers and were able to speak at length in their responses. Students in Arabic and Islamic Education had improved interest and engagement in their lessons, although higher level thinking skills were not developed enough. Students in a music lesson in the secondary phase demonstrated excellent creativity when they composed a beat rhythm to match poems they had created. Such opportunities to exercise autonomy in learning were not seen widely elsewhere. Independent learning using enquiry, research, critical thinking and other higher level skills were improving but still underdeveloped and opportunities were limited by a lack of computer access in classrooms.

[View judgements](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility was outstanding. They felt strongly responsible for their own learning, which allowed them to be both academically motivated and self-disciplined. They cared for their school environment and their classmates, and showed great respect for teachers, other school staff and visitors. The respectful relationships with one another allowed them to work collaboratively and to support one another in many lessons. They had a secure knowledge of healthy living, which allowed them to make healthy choices. Students' attendance was good.

Students' understanding of Islamic values, and their local, cultural and global awareness were good across the school. Most students had in-depth knowledge about their friends' cultures; they participated well in frequent cultural celebrations in the school such as Diwali. Most students knew detailed information about the UAE's history and heritage, and gave examples from Emirati life-styles in the recent history of Dubai. Students' understanding of how Islamic values influenced life in Dubai was developing across the school.

Students' community and environmental responsibility was good in the foundation stage and primary phase. It was outstanding in the secondary phase. All students were actively involved in the local community and had a strong work ethic. The Student Council was influential in the school's development. Following a suggestion for the creation of a school garden, a location was agreed by the school and support given to the project. Although the recycling programme was confined to secondary students, there were eco-monitors in all classes, who were instrumental in reducing the amount of water and electricity used by the school.

Secondary students had a clear understanding of sustainability and could give many examples of initiatives that they had taken to conserve resources.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was good in all phases of the school. In English, science and mathematics lessons, there were good starter activities, which engaged students' attention and consolidated prior attainment. Most teachers had high expectations and provided a range of activities, with good links to everyday life, that met the diverse needs and interests of students. Teachers used effective techniques to check understanding especially in English and science where the use of open questioning was prevalent. They also employed a variety of student grouping arrangements. Less successful lessons had a slow pace and low challenge, and were dominated by teacher talk especially in Arabic. In some lessons, students were neither given sufficient responsibility with regard to their learning nor supported sufficiently to assess their own successes and this restricted their development of enquiry, critical thinking and other higher-level skills. The structure of lessons in Arabic and Islamic Education had improved, since the last inspection, with teachers using a greater range of activities and appropriate resources.

Assessment was good in all phases of the school. The school had responded well to the last inspection report and most teachers were now using attainment data to set student targets. The data was used to identify students, who had not made expected progress, and to modify future lessons. As a result, teachers had a good awareness of their students' strengths and weaknesses. Teachers used effective strategies to check understanding, such as the use of mini whiteboards, probing questioning and plenaries in which students regularly summarised what they had learned. Peer-assessment and self-assessment were used less frequently. There was no common information technology platform for assessments across the school; a commercial system was restricted to the Foundation Stage and primary phase. A separate system was in place for the secondary phase but this was underdeveloped.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good in the primary and secondary phases. It was well planned and regularly reviewed. There was excellent provision in the foundation stage with a rich and varied programme for young children. This provision had been further enhanced by the extension of child-initiated learning and the effective use of the free play areas. Adjustments had been made to increase the time allocations in science, ICT and French. The school had introduced a series of exciting starter activities for units of learning, succeeding in sparking students' interest and fascination. The provision of extra-curriculum activities had been further enhanced by the introduction of ballroom dancing and other activities to meet the wider needs and interest of students. The ICT room was only available one hour per week per year group in the primary phase and this restricted the development of computer skills. The curriculum for Arabic, as a first language, did not meet the needs of students and there was no separate first language provision for a significant number of French students.

The curriculum design was good in meeting the needs of all students in all phases. The curriculum and related materials were differentiated and matched to students' needs in almost all classes. The Achievement Centre staff provided in-class and out of class support to those experiencing difficulties. Gifted and talented students participated in competitions and special activities but opportunities that challenged these students in the classrooms were underdeveloped. Student choice was available through free flow activities in the Foundation Stage, weekly programmes in the primary phase and Key Stage 3, and through the after-school activities programme. Older students did not have any choice of timetabled subjects.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's provision for health and safety was outstanding. The school had appropriate supervision and safety arrangements in place at all times, on the campus and buses. The school's premises, equipment and resources were checked regularly for quality and appropriate maintenance was provided when needed. Emergency evacuation drills were performed regularly and the transport arrangements were of excellent quality. The clinic kept health-related records on every student, stored medicines securely and provided students with an excellent medical service. Healthy living was widely and consistently promoted at school. The school nurses were involved in health education in the classroom and monitored the contents of students' lunch boxes on a regular basis. A clear and easy-to-follow child protection policy was in place and all students, staff and teachers were aware of it.

The quality of support was good across the school. Interactions between staff and students were characterised by trust and mutual respect. Attendance was good and there were robust procedures for monitoring the punctuality of all students. The school had efficient systems for the identification of students with special educational needs at entry and their needs were made known to all staff. After being identified, those students were provided with comprehensive and targeted support. One full-time support teacher and the head of inclusion provided in-class and withdrawal support. In addition, class teachers were actively involved in providing targeted support as prescribed by the students' individual education plans. Although the school did not have a full-time counsellor, it was able to provide students with the guidance they needed to progress academically.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The Principal and the Senior Leadership Team were new to their roles. Senior leaders were dedicated, effective and focused on improvement. They set a clear direction and promoted a shared vision. Leadership was effectively delegated and roles, responsibility and accountability were clear. There were strong teams throughout the school that shared planning and the monitoring of actions. Leaders had sufficient time out of the classroom to fulfill their responsibilities effectively; however, there was not a wide enough range of specialist curricular expertise in the secondary phase. Relationships were professional and communication channels were clear and open. A combination of strong school leadership supported by valuable educational expertise from the Governing Body ensured that there was the capacity to improve the school even further.

The school's self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. There was a strong system for gathering evidence on the school's performance from teachers, parents and students. The process of synthesising the data into key areas for improvement had been developed this year. Improvement plans were appropriately written with timescales, cost implications, responsibilities and success criteria. They were monitored regularly, becoming working documents. There had been strong progress in most of the recommendations from the previous inspection. The monitoring of teaching was effective and impacted on the setting of performance management targets for teachers. As yet, there was no continual professional development budget to support the realisation of these targets.

Partnerships between the school, parents and the community were good. The school provided detailed information for parents to support their children's learning at home through a variety of channels. Three parent consultative meetings were held a year and most student reports contained targets for improvement. The school had formed a thriving Parents Teacher Association with a range of sub-committees. Parents also

helped on visits, supported learning in the classrooms and participated in celebrations in school with their children. Regular two-way communication kept parents engaged in the life of the school. Relevant links with the local and wider community, including other schools, had been widened and impacted on the educational experiences of students.

Governance was good. It included representatives from most stakeholders including school leaders and parents. The new Governing Body sought views from the wider school community including students and so was gaining a good knowledge of the school. It monitored the school's actions effectively and held senior leaders accountable for all aspects of the school's performance. In the short time that the Governing Body had been in existence, it had responded positively to the needs of the school and all statutory requirements had been met.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources, was good. Day-to-day management was effective. Nearly all teaching staff had an educational qualification. Staffing in Key Stage 3 was stretched and teachers of Islamic Education taught the full primary and secondary age ranges. The premises were attractive and well maintained. Resources were good, especially in the Foundation Stage. As yet, there was little provision for students to use ICT as a part of their everyday learning.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

There was a very small group of Emirati students in the primary phase of the school and their attainment and progress were acceptable in all of the core areas of the curriculum. This was confirmed by the data provided by the school. Some of the group was receiving additional support and the teachers regularly met with those parents. The school was closely monitoring the attainment and progress of different groups of students including Emiratis.

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

The school had made significant improvements to their special education needs programme since the last inspection. The clear and comprehensive enrolment policies ensured the inclusion of students with special education needs. The early identification of these students was due to effective diagnostic testing when students started at the school, accurate teacher observations and follow-up from the Achievement Centre staff. Support plans and individual education plans targeted precise short and long-term goals that were monitored, reviewed and updated through the tracking system. Parents and agency partners worked

collaboratively with the school to implement these plans. The progress of students with special education needs was judged to be good across the school due to the differentiation of lessons and the in-class and withdrawal support programmes provided by the Achievement Centre staff. Programmes to support the gifted and talented students fully were still in the development stage.

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

Teaching quality was adequate in most Arabic lessons and had improved since the last inspection. The majority of lessons had clear objectives. Sufficient levels of interactions were observed in almost all lessons. Most lessons included frequent opportunities for students to collaborate with others. Although the lessons were well structured, expectations were not always sufficiently high and activities did not always lead to consistent improvement in the language. In a number of lessons, teacher-talk was dominant and learning was mainly reliant on the Ministry of Education textbooks.

Although the curriculum had been reviewed and modified, current planning did not ensure good progression across the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. The curriculum was not adapted enough so that the planned activities enabled all students, with their different needs, to make good or better progress across all language skills.



## 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	131	29%
	Last year	207	59%
Teachers	55		83%
Students	There were no senior students in the school		

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

There were no student responses due to the age of students in the school. Nearly all of the parents and teachers were satisfied with the school. Most parents agreed that students made good progress in Arabic as a second language, mathematics and science and nearly all thought their children made good progress in English. Nearly all parents believed that their children enjoyed school and that they were cared for and safe. Nearly all parents were positive about the breadth, richness and challenge of the curriculum. Most parents felt that the time allocated for homework was sufficient and that they were in a good position to support their children. Few parents replied about the school's special educational needs arrangements but nearly all staff were positive about special education needs support and students' progress. Most teachers and parents believed that the school valued their views and nearly all parents acknowledged the value of reports and parent consultation meetings. Most teachers felt that the last DSIB report had been shared with them and that the school leaders had involved them in planning for improvement. The majority of teachers felt that there were sufficient opportunities for professional development and time for planning.

## 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](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

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