

INSPECTION REPORT

Our Own High School - Dubai

Report published in January 2013

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Our Own High School - Dubai

Location	Al Warqaa
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemsoo-alwarqa.com
Telephone	04-2800077
Address	P.O. Box No 35519 Al Warqa'a, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Principal	Sanjeev Kumar Jolly
Curriculum	CBSE
Gender of students	Boys
Age / Grades or Year Groups	4-19 / Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	4,734
Students' nationalities	Indian
Number of Emirati students	0 (0%)
Date of the inspection	Sunday 30th September to Thursday 4th October 2012

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The context of the school

Located in Al Warqaa, Our Own High School serves a population of Indian expatriate boys, with about two per cent coming from Pakistan. At the time of the inspection there were 4,734 students on roll, ages four to 19 years.

The school follows the CBSE curriculum and students write CBSE exams in Grades 10 and 12 every March. Since the previous inspection a Kindergarten section had been added. This provided education for 59 children in two sections of Kindergarten 1, less than two per cent of the total enrolment.

A new Principal and Headmistress were appointed at the start of the current academic year, as were several leaders in the key subjects. The most significant aspect of the school was the large class sizes, which in many cases had a negative effect upon the quality of teaching, learning and the assessment of students' progress.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

Key strengths

- The good progress by the majority of students in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science;
- The outstanding personal and social development of students in the middle and secondary phases;
- The good teaching and learning in the middle and secondary phases;
- The good provision for the health and support of students;
- The good and distributive leadership across the school.

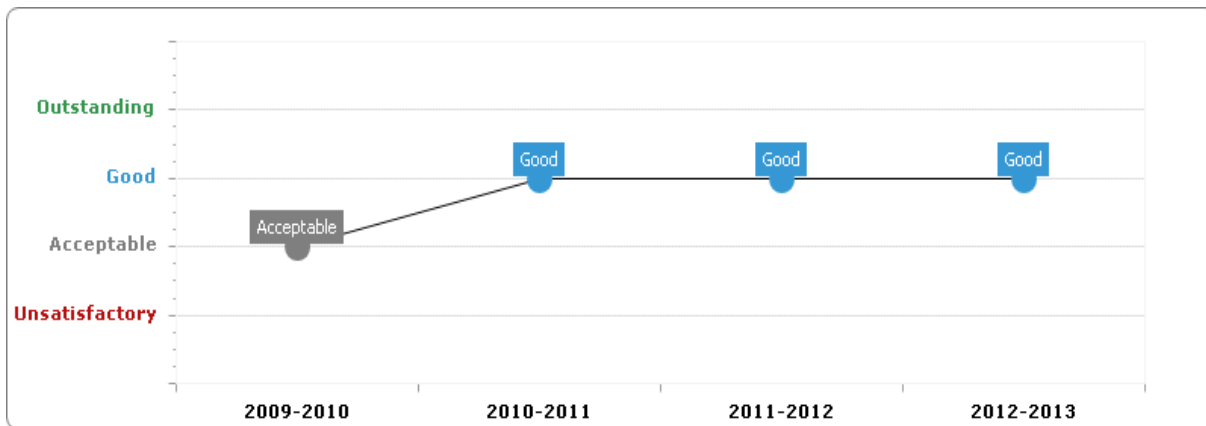
Recommendations

- Improve overall provision in the Kindergarten so that all children have a good educational experience;
- Improve attainment and progress in Arabic across the primary, middle and secondary phases;
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to eliminate unsatisfactory lessons;
- Use assessment information more effectively to improve the curriculum in lessons;
- Significantly reduce class sizes to allow better teaching and learning opportunities across the school.

Progress since the last inspection

- Kindergarten was added this year but it was not performing well;
- New senior leaders were in place, specifically the Principal and Headmistress;
- Middle level leaders had increased in numbers;
- Attainment and progress in secondary Arabic had improved to an acceptable level;
- Class sizes remained large and this affected the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good	Good
Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
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	Acceptable
Partnerships with 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 key subjects?

Attainment in the key subjects was mixed, from unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten to good in the middle and secondary phases. In Islamic Education, most students' memorisation and recitation skills of The Holy Qur'an were good. Students knew the Fiqh Law and Seerahs, and applied Islamic concepts and principles to real-life situations. Students' attainment in Islamic etiquette, morals and values was below expectations. In Arabic, most students listening, speaking, and reading skills were acceptable across the school. They were able to respond well to classroom instructions. Writing skills were improving in the secondary phase, but below the expected levels of development in the primary and middle phases. Attainment in English was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten but good in the primary, middle and secondary phases. In external examinations and in tests conducted in school, a majority of students attained above the levels expected in their curriculum. Attainment in mathematics was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten, acceptable in the primary phase and good in the middle and secondary phases. By the senior secondary phase, nearly all students showed secure knowledge and understanding across all key areas of mathematics. Attainment in science was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten but acceptable in the primary phase and good in the middle and secondary phases. Whilst most students had good theoretical knowledge of science, they were all limited in their practical skill development. The lack of practical laboratory opportunities for the development of investigative and experimental skills was a factor.

Progress was also mixed across the school and weakest in the Kindergarten. In Islamic Education, students showed varied but good progress over the three phases. In Arabic, most primary students made unsatisfactory progress, but it was acceptable in the middle and secondary phases. Significant numbers of students in the primary years made limited progress in their reading comprehension and writing skills. Speaking skills in the middle and secondary phases showed steady development of vocabulary and sentence construction using basic grammar rules. Progress in English was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten and good in the primary, middle and secondary phases. In lessons and in their recent work, students' knowledge, understanding and vocabulary were being well developed. Listening and speaking skills were stronger than reading and writing skills across all phases. Progress in mathematics was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten, acceptable in the primary and good in the middle and secondary phases. Progress was stronger in classes where students were encouraged to think for themselves rather than focus solely on facts and formulae. Students in the Kindergarten and Grades 1 to 6 were not always sufficiently challenged in their lessons. This led to unsatisfactory progress in the Kindergarten. Students in Grades 7 to 12 were provided with more challenging work through the provision of well-planned lessons. This allowed them to achieve good progress. Progress in science was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten and good in the primary, middle and secondary phases. The lack of practical laboratory opportunities for the development of investigative and experimental skills limited the rate of progress for a significant minority of students. The overall progress of students with special educational needs was acceptable.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal and social development varied across the different phases of the school. It was acceptable in the Kindergarten, good in the primary phase and outstanding in the middle and secondary phases. In the Kindergarten, children had acceptable attitudes and behaviour with appropriate self-reliance and consideration of others. Primary students demonstrated good behaviour with mature and sensible attitudes, but required supervision and direction. Relationships with other students and staff were respectful and they demonstrated positive attitudes towards healthy living. The middle and secondary phase students showed very positive and responsible attitudes almost all of the time and demonstrated strong self-reliance. Their overall behaviour was outstanding, with a commitment to school life evident. Relationships between students and staff were very respectful and students demonstrated excellent understanding of healthy living. Attendance and punctuality were good overall. The Kindergarten children's understanding of Islamic values was acceptable, as they knew some features of an Islamic society and demonstrated kindness and friendship. Most could name some aspects of UAE culture. In the primary phase, students demonstrated good understanding of Islam and identified and explained local traditions and heritage. They compared different cultures and identified some elements of their own culture. In middle and secondary phases all students had strong appreciation of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness. Almost all exhibited a positive attitude towards the heritage and local traditions of the UAE and could explain their relevance to people in Dubai. They were able to describe many aspects of a variety of cultures providing details and examples. They were competent at comparing and contrasting them with their own culture. In the Kindergarten most children followed routines to take care of their own clothes, food and school materials. Most children participated actively in practical projects such as environmental activities. In the middle and secondary years students were very knowledgeable about other inhabitants of Dubai and the world. They were aware of their personal work requirements. Students showed a very good understanding of environmental sustainability and took care of their immediate environment.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten. Teaching was acceptable in the primary phase and good in both the middle and secondary phases. Most teachers showed good subject knowledge and planned their lessons carefully. However, teachers' knowledge of how children learn was variable in the lower grades and there were insufficient opportunities for discovery, choice and problem-solving by students. In the better lessons, teachers ensured that all students were engaged, actively involved and appropriately challenged. In less successful lessons, class management was often poor and too much time was taken up by teachers' talk. Weaker lessons lacked challenge and activities were not

different enough to meet the needs of all students. Group work was regularly used to promote learning, but its effectiveness was constrained due to the very large class sizes. In the majority of lessons teachers successfully used questions to check prior knowledge, but questions that encouraged students to develop their thinking skills were observed in only a minority of lessons. Lessons were observed across the curriculum including art, music and information and communication technology (ICT), in which the teaching was good.

The quality of learning was judged to be unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten, acceptable in the primary phase and good in both the middle and secondary phases. Most students across the school were motivated learners, keen to participate in lessons and to make progress in their studies. In group activities they collaborated well with their peers. Most students demonstrated appropriate listening skills and the majority could discuss and explain their learning. Students responded positively when given opportunities to apply their knowledge within real life contexts. Students progressively developed greater independence and self-reliance as their ages increased. On reaching the Grades 11 and 12, most students demonstrated high level enquiry and research skills.

The assessment of learning was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten and acceptable in the other phases of the school. In Kindergarten there was insufficient use of assessment to assist in skill building or to direct the lesson planning. There were new assessment methods implemented since March 2012 in the other grades but they were not informing teaching or the curriculum. A great deal of summative assessment data was collected but not used as fully or consistently by all teachers to improve learning outcomes. Oral assessment by teachers was usually directed at large numbers of students rather than individuals. Observations indicated that peer or self-assessment was very limited. Review of the students' work books indicated that although they were marked regularly by teachers, students did not consistently receive the feedback necessary for improvement. In the Arabic department assessment was weaker than in other key subjects.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten, acceptable in the primary and middle phases and good in the secondary phase. The Kindergarten curriculum was unsatisfactory and failed to provide adequately for the needs of early childhood learners. Continuity, progression, integration and coherence were absent. There were limited opportunities for exploration, investigation and play. The strict adherence to the specified examination syllabus had promoted an over-reliance on text books. The school curriculum provided some enrichment beyond that of the CBSE. This was more effective in science and English and in the secondary phase. Progression within Grades 7 to 9 mathematics and Grades 1 to 6 Arabic was uneven, with some repetition evident. The periodic review of the curriculum was arranged by

subject leaders and some significant modifications had been implemented. Some good examples of cross-curricular links were evident but they were not common. A strong voluntary enrichment programme was in place but it did not involve all students. There was no distinct modification to the standard curriculum for those students with special educational needs who were integrated into the main classes. Across the school, insufficient open-ended and practical experiences were provided to engage students and promote their creativity and independence as learners. Although enrichment activities were available to strong students outside regular class time, enrichment during lessons was not observed.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of all students were good. Effective arrangements were in place to ensure that all areas of the school were secure. School transport arrangements and procedures were well organised and supervised. The school was clean and well maintained. Repairs were carried out efficiently and quickly. The medical team kept comprehensive records on the medical needs of all students and ensured that those needs were effectively addressed. The school premises and canteen were regularly monitored to ensure adherence to good hygiene standards. The school organised regular fire drills and all fire-fighting appliances held current certificates. Healthy lifestyles and eating habits were well promoted and snacks adhered to healthy eating guidelines.

A detailed child protection policy and reporting system was in place and all staff members were fully aware of the reporting requirements. Respectful staff-student relations prevailed throughout the school. Systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality were well organised and effective. A number of programmes, such as aptitude testing, supported students' personal development and guidance towards further education and the world of work. Students made use of a self-referral process to seek guidance on personal matters but the school lacked a systematic approach to recording each student's personal development and thereby assuring continuity of support.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school welcomed students with special educational needs. The recent appointment of an special educational needs co-ordinator enhanced the support received by students. At the time of the inspection provision was variable. Most teachers were aware of students' needs. Students were mostly well integrated in their classes and made acceptable progress overall. In the majority of lessons teachers made some adaptation of the quantity or levels of work. However, sometimes their expectations of students were too low or they did not know how to set the right kind of work to help their students make good progress.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good overall. The new Principal and Headmistress had already demonstrated the capacity to make further improvements in the school. They shared a vision for the school's future and set a clear direction for it. Leadership was shared amongst many staff members and effective teams were in place across subject areas in the primary, middle and secondary phases. Good relationships and communication were evident. Some educational outcomes had improved since the previous inspection, but there remained areas for further improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were of acceptable quality. The school's leaders had a realistic view of the priorities for improvement and had taken important steps to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, the school's evaluations of teaching and other aspects of provision were inconsistent and often too generous. Improvement planning was accurate but lacked full details of personnel and timelines for reviewing progress. Action on the recommendations was mostly effective.

The partnerships with parents and the community were good. The school had established strong links with the parent community which contributed to students' learning in a positive manner. Parents were highly supportive of the school and participated in monthly Parents' Advisory Council meetings and discussed issues related to heavy school bags, healthy food and co-curricular activities. Regular and clear communication between the school and parents was through the council and the school's website. Links with the community outside the school enhanced students' learning.

The quality of governance was acceptable. The school was held accountable for its performance on a regular basis and communication with the leaders was frequent. Stakeholder representation amongst governors was less than complete. The governing body had not met the statutory requirements for class size limits in the Kindergarten and in almost all other classes. Consequently, the learning opportunities for students were noticeably undermined.

Management of the school, including staffing, facilities and resources was good. The school's timetable and routine were managed in an effective manner. Most teachers were well qualified and suitably deployed and staff development programmes were in place. The quality of the premises was good and provided access to all students including students with additional needs. There was a resource room for students with special educational needs, but the one person appointed could not meet the needs of all students. The two libraries were well equipped with relevant resources that students used. Almost all the classrooms in the primary phase were too small for the 35 to 42 students they had to accommodate.

[View judgements](#)

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	1748	39%
	Last year	3057	61%
Teachers	149		69%
Students	787		86%

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

A minority of parents responded to this year's survey, down from a majority last year. A majority of teachers and most senior students responded to their surveys. Parents were generally satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. Most believed that their children were making good progress in the key subjects, with the exception of Islamic Education. A minority of senior students disagreed that progress was good in Islamic Education, Arabic as an additional language, mathematics and science. Although most senior students indicated that they enjoyed school, more than 100 disagreed. Most parents believed that behaviour at the school was good, but about a quarter of senior students disagreed that this was so. Most students indicated that they felt safe at school and on the buses, but a few indicated that they did not. A minority of students complained that bullying had not been properly addressed by the school. Parents and students alike expressed a desire for more co-curricular options. Teachers were overwhelmingly supportive of the school on all aspects of provision.

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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