

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Mawakeb School - Al Garhoud

Report published in April 2013

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Mawakeb School - Al Garhoud

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.almawakeb.sch.ae
Telephone	04-2851415
Address	P.O.Box 10799, Dubai
Principal	Nubugh Nasr
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2,400
Largest nationality group of Students	Arab
Number of Emirati students	409 (17%)
Date of the inspection	17th February to 21st February 2013

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The context of the school

Al Mawakeb School, in Al Garhoud, serves a predominantly Middle Eastern Arab community. It is a cosmopolitan school, of 2,400 students with more than 60 nationalities. Approximately 17 per cent of the students were Emirati.

The school offered an adapted United States curriculum, plus the Ministry of Education Islamic Education and Arabic curricula. The Kindergarten curriculum was delivered in three languages; Arabic, English and French. In the rest of the school the curriculum was delivered in English, with Arabic and French as separate subjects. Some Grade 5 and Grade 8 students had participated in international benchmark tests in English, mathematics and science. Grade 12 students participated in SAT tests.

At the time of the inspection, 30 students had been identified as having special educational needs. A few were physically disabled. The acting Principal was in his fourth year in that post. A minority of teachers were new to the school since September 2012. Although almost all teachers held a first degree, about 40 per cent did not have a qualification in teaching.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The development of the tri-lingual experience in the Kindergarten;
- Consistent quality of attainment and progress in English across all phases of the school;
- The personal approach and support provided by the guidance counsellor to Grades 10 to 12 students regarding their future career pathways.

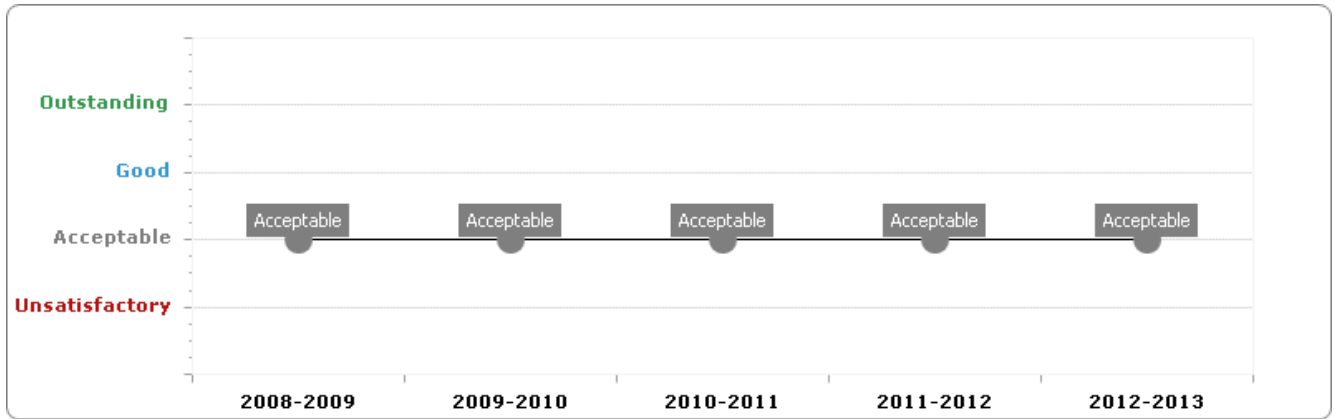
Recommendations

- Improve the accuracy of student attainment information to enable teachers to make valid comparisons with international data;
- Improve students' understanding and appreciation of local and global cultures, and their involvement with environmental issues and the local community;
- Improve attainment and progress by adopting a greater range of more effective teaching strategies to meet the needs of all groups of students, including those with special educational needs;
- Improve school leadership to ensure progress is made;
- Ensure compliance with Ministry of Education requirements in relation to the teaching of Arabic as a first language in the high school.

Progress since the last inspection

- Attainment in Arabic as an additional language had strengthened at high school;
- Attainment and progress in English were more consistent throughout the school;
- Progress in mathematics at Kindergarten was good.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable across the school. Most students showed adequate knowledge of manners and worship rituals but their Qur'an recitation skills were not sufficiently well developed. Attainment in Arabic as a first language was strongest in listening. In Arabic as an additional language, older students could engage in conversations but their writing was restricted. In English, attainment in writing throughout the school was weaker than the other skills. Overall, girls performed significantly better than boys. In mathematics, the majority of middle school students could make geometric constructions and explain characteristics and method. Senior students were able to persevere to find solutions and justify conclusions. Science attainment was restricted due to limited practical work. This resulted in limited development of scientific skills and understanding.

In Islamic Education, most students made adequate gains in knowledge about the Prophet's Seerah and Hadeeth. In Arabic as a first language, progress in the high school was slower than elsewhere, while in Arabic as an additional language students made better progress in listening and in reading than in other aspects. In English, the structure, length and quality of writing were not consistent throughout the school. Progress in algebra and geometry was good by the end of Grade 8. In almost all phases science progress was restricted. The development of investigative skills and understanding were limited. Critical thinking skills were not developed effectively.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students' attainment and progress was acceptable overall. On entry most had lower levels of English language, mathematics and science than their peers but, in Islamic Education and Arabic, students' progress was better. By the end of Kindergarten progress was stronger with attainment more closely matched to that of their peers. In middle and senior classes girls were performing above expectations in all subjects except mathematics and science. However, too many senior boys were passive learners. They had weaker attainment. Overall attendance was variable. Many senior boys had poor attendance and punctuality which influenced their levels of attainment. Reports to parents had a similar format across all phases. Grades were provided but these were not aligned to international standards. Limited information on areas for improvement were provided. Support for students going on to higher education was comprehensive. Regular career counsellor interviews took place and staff helped students with the completion of university application forms.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good overall although a few lacked appropriate self-control, respect and responsibility. Relationships between students and teachers were mainly positive and the students collaborated well in groups. The school encouraged healthy living, with older students organising activities which helped them to keep fit and healthy. Attendance was good and most students arrived promptly, although those who were late disrupted the flow of the first lesson. Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness were acceptable. Respect for Islam was evident, with students able to describe some features of Islamic society. Their knowledge and understanding were less secure when they described the impact of Islamic values on peoples' lives. Throughout the school, respect for UAE culture was encouraged. Students appreciated their own cultures and those represented within the diversity of their classes. Community and environmental responsibility was acceptable. Students were generally aware of their social responsibilities in the school. They participated in some community service events but the overall impact was limited due to the inconsistent level of involvement. Students generally enjoyed their lessons and whilst many understood the importance of working hard, they were not always given the opportunity to take the initiative. They were encouraged to improve the environment but had limited awareness of wider environment issues such as global warming and pollution.

[View judgments](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

The quality of teaching was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable at the other phases. Teachers had good subject knowledge. In Kindergarten, they were using active learning methods and appropriate resources. Their teaching was characterised by vigorous, well-directed questioning which involved all children. In the elementary, middle and secondary phases, a majority of teachers used a range of learning activities such as group and paired work to enhance learning and enjoyment. In a minority of lessons, insufficient attention was given to collaborative and active learning. Too many teachers still relied on textbooks and worksheets. In a few classes in the elementary and middle phases, lesson pace was too slow because teachers planned insufficient work. In mathematics and science at the middle and high phases there was too much teacher talk in lessons. A minority of English teachers, in middle and high, made good use of plenary sessions. This allowed for a review of learning. Throughout the school teachers did not provide a sufficient range of tasks to meet the different learning needs and abilities of students.

The quality of students' learning was good in Kindergarten and acceptable at the other phases. In most lessons, students were attentive to teachers and worked hard. Across the school they collaborated very well in group work when given the opportunity and when the purpose of the task was made clear.

At times students showed responsibility for their own learning by taking notes. Where the pace of teaching was slow, students were passive and uninvolved. In lessons with limited variation in teaching methodology, they became distracted and, as a result, made slow progress in learning. In only a few lessons were students able to make connections between what was being learned and their daily lives. They mostly worked from the same page of their text and there was insufficient opportunity for the more able to progress.

Assessment was acceptable across all phases. Teachers and supervisors had improved in their collection of assessment data and in tracking students' progress. Nonetheless, attainment data collected by the school was not sufficiently robust to allow valid comparisons to be made with appropriate international standards. Records and individual student profiles were regularly updated. Class quizzes and termly reports provided helpful information on progress. Assessment information from class and end-of-term tests was used to identify high-attaining students or those needing additional support. However, some teachers made too little use of this assessment information to plan activities and resources to match the full range of students' needs. Marking of written work was not sufficiently informative. There were few comments in exercise books to help students improve their work or to plan for next steps in learning.

[View judgments](#)

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

The curriculum was good in Kindergarten and acceptable in the other phases. It was generally broad and balanced but did not allow for student choice. It lacked art from Grade 7. It was reviewed regularly. The school had begun to focus on the provision of support for less able students and challenge for those who were more able. However, the curriculum had not been appropriately adjusted. Many extra-curricular activities enriched classroom work but did not generally extend beyond the school day or the school campus. The Kindergarten programme was thematic and activity based. In almost all subjects it encouraged discovery and independence. The curriculum in Arabic as a first language in high school did meet the needs of all native speakers of Arabic. Across the school strategies for encouraging students to take the initiative and responsibility for their own learning were not widespread, nor were opportunities to engage in critical thinking, rigorous research and the application of knowledge.

[View judgments](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for students' health and safety were acceptable. Procedures and systems were thorough. However, there was limited monitoring of people entering and leaving the premises at the beginning and end of the school day. There were effective systems in place to promote good attendance but procedures to promote punctuality were less rigorous. Buildings were safe and effectively maintained. Arrangements for the emergency evacuation of the buildings were appropriate. Transport arrangements were well organised. School facilities met the needs of most students. Staff and students were not fully aware of the school's approach to child protection. Healthy lifestyle programmes were supported by the medical staff, who provided good care and kept accurate records. Healthy options were available in the canteens, but choices did not support the drive for healthy eating.

The quality of support was good in the high school and acceptable elsewhere. Teachers and school leaders were approachable and had developed positive relationships with students. The school had an inclusive approach to admissions and had developed acceptable systems to identify students with learning and other needs. Academic guidance in the high school was particularly strong. Students had a high quality personalised programme of careers guidance, support for university choices and applications.

[View judgments](#)

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

Students with special educational needs made acceptable progress in almost subjects except English where progress was good. Identification of students was secure and the school had developed individual educational plans for each student with special needs. These were shared with parents. In-class support was not sufficiently developed to meet the needs of all. For some the work was too difficult, while the gifted and talented were not appropriately challenged.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was acceptable. The Acting Principal and his management colleagues were unable to provide teachers with the necessary impetus or enthusiasm for improvement. They had not succeeded in bringing about the urgent changes which were necessary to take the school forward. Senior leaders and co-ordinators had remained too inward looking and could not avail themselves readily of advice or research from the leading edge of educational development. They had had the vision to establish a good tri-lingual experience in Kindergarten, but had not succeeded in advancing that innovative thinking to the rest of the school. The school's capacity to improve was limited.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. A range of self-evaluation processes were in place. However, senior managers' evaluations were over-optimistic, lacked rigour and were inaccurate, leading to a sense of false security about the state of teaching and learning in the school. The school's self-evaluation report was anecdotal and focused on a narrative. It was not a sharp instrument for assessing the school's performance. Developmental plans lacked detail and rigour. There was insufficient urgency to deliver the rapid changes which were essential in a school which had improved minimally in only a few areas after five previous inspections. The school had fully implemented only one of the recommendations of the 2012 report.

Partnership with parents and the community was acceptable. Communication with parents was regular and comprehensive. Parents' participation in the life and work of the school was limited. Few were fully aware of the school's long-term priorities. Most felt welcome in the school and were satisfied with the way in which the school addressed their concerns. Reporting on progress was regular but mechanistic, with little advice on how parents could help their children to improve. Overall, there was little evidence of students' learning being enhanced by collaboration between the school and the community.

Governance was acceptable. The governing board was very knowledgeable about the life of the school. Members were frequently in the school and involved themselves in supporting school improvement. However, the board did not hold the school fully to account. Representation on the board was limited. Parental representation was through an advisory body to which parents were not elected, but for which they were selected. The board had appropriate procedures for communicating with both students and parents.

Management was acceptable. The school was effectively organised to ensure smooth daily operation. Teachers were generally appropriately qualified in academic terms, but a large minority did not have any qualification in teaching.

The school buildings were well maintained though ageing, and had limited access for those with additional needs. Sports areas were limited. Some specialist facilities were restricted, for example, in science, leading to constraints on learning and on students' practical experiences. Learning resources, particularly in information technology, were insufficient to allow the curriculum to be enhanced appropriately.

[View judgments](#)

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	329	23%
	Last year	468	35%
Teachers	112		61%
Students	357		81%

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

Most parents who responded to the survey felt that their children were making good progress, but they expressed some concerns about Arabic. Almost all indicated that their children enjoyed being at school, and that they were well looked after and safe. Only a small majority thought that students' behaviour was good. Most felt that the school was well led and were satisfied with the quality of education provided. A minority did not feel that the school offered enough extra-curricular activities. A significant minority of teachers indicated that they did not know how well the school identified special educational needs. In most other aspect, almost all were very positive. A few students who were learning Arabic as an additional language did not feel that they were making adequate progress. Over a quarter expressed concerns about behaviour in school, but most felt well looked after and safe. Most felt respected and valued in the school.

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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