

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai Modern Education School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai Modern Education School

Location	Al Mizhar
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dmeschools.com
Telephone	04-2885115
Address	Mizher P.O. BOX 61720
Principal	Hind Mohammed Lootah
Curriculum	US/MOE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / KG 1-Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	2499
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	1722 (69%)
Date of the inspection	27th to 30th January 2014

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The context of the school

Dubai Modern Education School, located in Al Mizhar, provides education for girls and boys aged 3 to 18 years. Almost 2,500 students were enrolled. The school provided two curricula. Approximately one third of the student population attended the Ministry of Education curriculum and the remainder received a US-style curriculum. Fifty students had been identified as having a special educational need and 89 students had been identified as having an exceptional gift or talent. Approximately 69% of the students were Emirati. Forty four different nationalities were enrolled in total.

The US section of the school offered a Kindergarten, an elementary school for Grades 1 to 5, middle school with Grades 6 to 8 and a high school, Grades 9 to 12. The MoE section offered cycles 1, 2 and 3 across Grades 1 to 5, 6 to 9 and 10 to 12. NAP tests were administered in the school. No international evaluation tools were used.

Almost all the teaching staff were appropriately qualified. Thirty three new teachers had been recruited in a 240 strong staff. These included ten new teachers of English, five new Arabic teachers, seven new mathematics teachers and two new science teachers.

The principal had been in post for three months and held responsibility for leading the US section as well as the overall leadership. The senior leadership team consisted of the principal, director of operations, MoE principal and the supervisor. A team of academic supervisors made up the bulk of the middle management team. There were 17 teaching assistants.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Students' understanding of Islamic values and their cultural awareness was strong;
- Teacher-student relationships were generally positive and caring.
- A newly developing culture for change was already influencing school improvement.

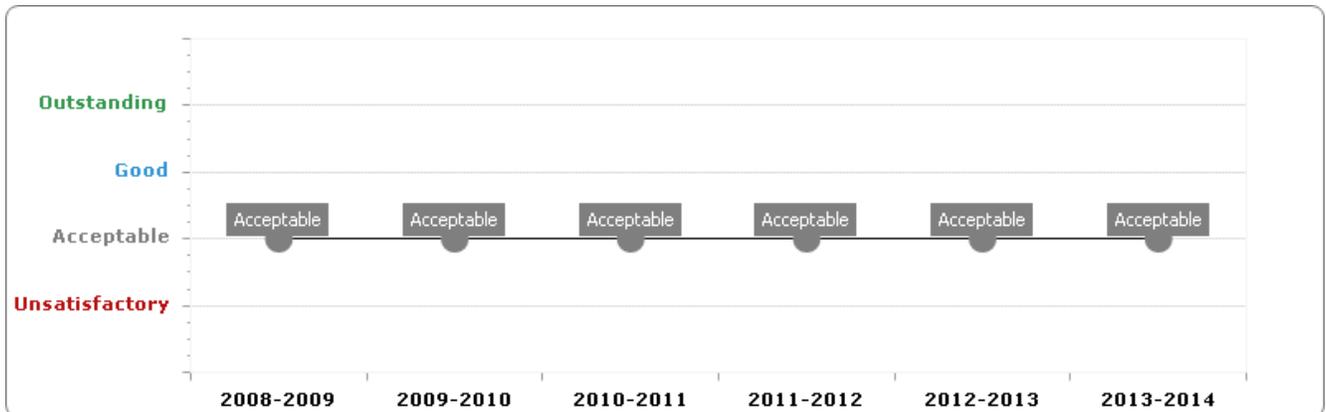
Recommendations

- Develop the leadership structure so that a shared understanding of the school's vision, operation and accountabilities informs action planning in a more focused manner;
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - training teachers about how students of all ages learn and how to provide for this in the classroom;
 - reducing unnecessary teacher control in lessons;
 - providing more opportunities for critical thinking;
 - using assessment information more effectively to match work to students' needs;
- Provide a dedicated whole-school curriculum co-ordinator to promote a curriculum which is planned and resourced to deliver the US Common Core State Standards;
- Use externally validated assessments to moderate the school's own assessments and to give staff, the students and their parents, a realistic view of students' attainment in an international context.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school had defined its vision and set higher professional expectations for all staff;
- Self-evaluation had improved and the leadership had begun set appropriate targets;
- Health and safety arrangements had improved in all areas of the school;
- Elementary mathematics, and science in all phases had improved;
- The use of technology in teaching and learning remained too basic. It was not contributing positively to the development of critical thinking and enquiry skills;
- Many teachers remained focused on textbook-directed lessons and did not effectively promote independent, learner-led and enquiry-based experiences.

Trend of overall performance



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

	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	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

In Islamic Education, most students had basic knowledge of the key principles of faith and worship in Islam as well as acceptable knowledge about the Seerah. However, students had poor memorisation and recitation skills. In Arabic as a first language, while listening and reading skills were at the expected levels, too many students were unable to communicate ideas and thoughts effectively. Girls had better language skills than boys. Creative and extended writing were not well developed. In Arabic as an additional language, middle school students had better listening and speaking skill than primary students and could engage in short simple conversations but writing skills were less developed. In English, most kindergarten children understood single sounds and matched them to letter formation. More able students, particularly girls in middle and high school, discussed fluently and debated topical issues. Students' writing skills were underdeveloped. Basic understanding of number developed well within expected levels for kindergarten children. Elementary students found problem solving relatively straightforward. Senior students could reason and persevere to find solutions. They demonstrated an ability to use scientific concepts in line with curriculum expectations. Performance in external examinations had improved.

Most students in primary made only acceptable progress in Islamic Education. Middle and high school students' memorisation and recitation skills were underdeveloped over time. In Arabic, both as a first and additional language, writing skills were slow to reach expected levels in the school. Students studying Arabic as an additional language in middle school developed their reading steadily and applied grammatical rules correctly. In Kindergarten and the early stage of Elementary, students' progress was linked to slow acquisition of active speaking skills in English. Girls' fluency generally helped them make more sustainable progress in writing. Most students increased their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts in relation to their previous learning. They developed scientific skills but did not demonstrate them sufficiently often.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of learning skills across the school was acceptable. Most students were receptive learners. They were most interested in classes where they learned actively. There were effective examples of practical investigations in elementary science, and problem solving in mathematics at this stage. Older students, particularly girls at middle and high school stages, debated topical issues. When given opportunities, students at all stages learned together increasingly well in pairs and groups. However, language skills of boys were not developed well enough for meaningful discussions. Across the school, girls were generally more aware than boys about what they were good at and what they needed to improve. Students from

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elementary to high school increasingly used the classroom internet as a reference and research tool, occasionally independently. They made best use of information technology when they analysed and summarised their findings in their own words. Critical thinking at all stages was not well developed.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility was acceptable. Their behaviour was generally respectful and relationships were positive. Most students followed school rules. A majority of students participated in exercise but a minority made unhealthy eating choices. Most had good attitudes and were courteous to one another although a few older boys were disruptive in classes and around the school. Attendance for the previous term was unsatisfactory for Kindergarten and acceptable elsewhere. A significant number of students arrived late to school. Students demonstrated a clear understanding of Islamic value and the importance of Islam in modern society in Dubai. They knew how to apply Islamic values meaningfully to their lives. Students in higher grades could debate how local traditions and heritage were evident in the UAE as well as discuss different aspects of Dubai's multi-lingual and multi-cultural society. Students described their own culture and tradition proudly. Most students were involved in activities outside of school and valued their opportunities to meet students from other countries and cultures. Almost all students knew the importance of hard work and most older students understood that goal setting led to future success. Relative to their grade levels, older students had better knowledge about conservation and environmental issues than younger students but children applied this knowledge to their daily lives better than the older students.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was acceptable. Across the school, teachers planned lessons consistently. They included lesson outcomes and most provided tasks and activities for different groups of learners. However, in most lessons the nature of these tasks and activities was not consistently based on teachers' assessment of students' learning needs. Not all teachers clarified the lesson objectives with students or the features of successful learning. As a result, students, particularly boys, did not always understand what they should know and be able to do at the end of the lessons. In the most effective lessons teachers' questions checked students' knowledge and understanding. Students were required to explain clearly and justify their thinking. Most teachers were beginning to extend opportunities for students' independent

research using the internet. At the end of lessons, teachers did not regularly review learning to identify next steps for students to help them improve.

Assessment practices in Kindergarten were acceptable but unsatisfactory elsewhere. In Kindergarten, assessment was used appropriately to group children according to their abilities. However the match of teaching to the range of learning needs and styles was not effective. Across other phases, individual departments had devised assessment schemes and these were being implemented but it was too early to identify a clear link to the teaching intention. The importance placed on some criteria such as knowledge rather than understanding and application was inappropriate. Teachers relied on too many irrelevant worksheets and very basic questioning to assess learning. The work sheets were rarely designed to meet individual needs. They lacked challenge and often required only short answers. Questioning was mainly directed to the whole class rather than to individuals and provided few opportunities to develop students' critical thinking skills. Students who already knew the answers tended to dominate sessions which did little to improve their learning or help those students who were trying to understand a new concept. Progress was evaluated and recorded regularly by teachers but the information was not used well in lesson planning to meet the learning needs of all groups of students. Students' work was marked but rarely contained advice on how to improve performance. The school had not evaluated student performance against reliable international assessment benchmarks.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was acceptable across all phases. The curriculum used Common Core Standards, California Standards and the MoE Curriculum standards. All provision was textbook driven, exemplified by excessive use of subject materials rather than carefully designed programmes to meet students' needs. Planning across phases had been taken from the scope and sequence provided by the textbook publisher. There had been some attempt to modify the curriculum but this had not been effective due to poor organisational leadership. A few cross-curricular links were in place, such as mathematics word problems and science/English collaborations on selected projects. There was a range of appropriate extra-curricular activities available to students, such as sports, subject competitions, science fairs, healthy foods and the "Innovation Center". Nevertheless, the lack of understanding of students' starting points hindered any possibility of providing a programme that met, challenged and supported students' needs.

Curriculum design was unsatisfactory across all phases. The school had begun developing basic categories of groups of students such as those with special educational needs. The Kindergarten curriculum was not

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sufficiently modified to meet the needs of students with significant difficulties or significantly high ability. The school had not developed its provision for the range of students, grouped according to their needs, learning styles, aspirations or interests. Students in upper grades had no curriculum choices. Younger students had very limited opportunities to make independent choices in their learning experiences.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for health and safety was good. The buildings and grounds were well maintained and secure. Adults were present throughout the day and students were supervised well. Safety drills were held and good records were kept. The improved effective transport system included 10 RTA trained bus monitors. The science laboratories had proper safety equipment and chemicals were locked away, as were the medicines in the clinic. Healthy living was encouraged but canteen selections included some unhealthy foods along with healthy choices. Three clinics, including the new kindergarten clinic, kept detailed health records. Clinic staff advised individual students on topics such as obesity and diabetes, and provided classroom lessons on health-related topics. The clinic worked in conjunction with the students to sponsor a breast cancer awareness week. There was general knowledge of child protection but procedures and practice required further development.

The quality of support was good in Kindergarten and acceptable in other phases. Staff and students had good relationships especially in Kindergarten. Behaviour was managed acceptably in the older boys' sections and managed well in the rest of the school. In all phases, teachers knew their students' well, showing care and concern for their well-being. Systems to address attendance and punctuality issues were being revised. Students with special education needs (SEN) were admitted into the school. Systems to identify students with SEN and develop precise learning targets for them were in an early stage of development. The school had effective systems to support the social and emotional needs of students. A new guidance counsellor provided career and college counselling for older students and all students were well supported by the counselling and guidance team.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. The newly-appointed principal had developed a new vision for the school. Senior and middle leaders were beginning to make improvements, such as new lesson planning templates and new ways of teaching and thinking across the faculties. While some steady progress had been made, leaders did not ensure that improvement plans were linked enough to students' outcomes. This was reflected in the lack of a consistent understanding of the school's vision and mission.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning had improved and was acceptable. Specific leadership groups had been set up, developing action plans for each of the recommendations. These actions represented a committed and earnest effort to enhance provision. The school's health and safety arrangements had improved. Professional development for teachers was appropriately focused and leaders at all levels were being supported. Teacher appraisal had been formalised. However, more data was gathered than was analysed. It was not used to inform practice. Measurable improvement was hindered because the strategic vision for the school was not understood by all.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Parents, through the Mothers' Committee were present in the school. The members of this group were passionate about their children, committed to the school and anxious to help. They did not, however, play a regular role in school events although some pastoral education was carried out. Parents were satisfied with the level of reporting, access to teachers, awareness of the topics covered and upcoming events. A potentially powerful community development programme had begun for girls in Grades 9 to 11 related to independence, social contribution and proactive learning. Other community programmes involving invited speakers to the school were offered.

Governance was acceptable. New governors had been appointed. They were committed and informed but had not had an opportunity to hold leaders to account for improvements. They understood their roles and wished for close, positive relations with the school community. They were supportive of enabling new school leaders to bring about change and develop organisational and accountability structures. Accessibility to the board for all stakeholders was a priority. While statutory requirements were met, the governors had not encouraged the school to look externally towards international assessments or community involvement for all students. The board had ensured that safety issues had been properly managed since the previous inspection.

Management was acceptable. Adequately qualified staff were appropriately deployed. Newly installed elevators gave disabled access to upper floors. However, shortcomings in the level of resourcing and size of specialist accommodation had impacted negatively on the quality of learning opportunities in the planned curriculum.

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

The school had made progress in developing identification strategies for students with SEN. However, more refined identification strategies were needed to ensure that the curriculum could be modified to meet the needs of each student. Due to a lack of clear targets, monitoring of progress of the students was underdeveloped. Nevertheless, students' progress was acceptable in classes in most key subjects. Additional staff had been hired to address the behavioural needs of students but the school lacked a special education teacher/co-ordinator who could assist in developing appropriate and precise learning plans. A special needs committee had been formed to guide the programme. Parents were actively involved in the identification process and in follow-up conferences with teachers and staff. Differentiation was observed in only a few lessons. Challenge for more able students was not a common feature of the school. The admissions policy supported the inclusion of all students with SEN but a more comprehensive formal policy in line with international expectations had not yet been developed.

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

Although the quality of teaching in Arabic as a first language had improved since last inspection, it remained inconsistent overall. Most teachers were aware of the subject content and had adequate ability to teach Arabic as a first language. Lesson planning was appropriate and there were sufficient opportunities for students to participate. However, these opportunities were not always effective in enhancing students' language skills. Challenging opportunities to engage students in quality discussion were often limited as lessons were generally dominated by excessive teacher talk. Attempts to address the language needs of students were not often effective. The curriculum was strictly based on the Ministry of Education text book. The scope and sequence of the curriculum content was planned appropriately. In particular, the curriculum did not include well-planned opportunities for the promotion of advanced oral and written communication skills. There was an appropriate range of extra activities for students, such as poetry competitions and reading clubs but enrichment, to make the daily lessons more interesting and relevant to students, was limited.

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	179	14%
	Last year	243	18%
Teachers	112		65%
Students	510		72%

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

Only a small proportion of parents responded to their survey. A majority of teachers and students responded. Parents who responded were generally very supportive of the school. They were satisfied with the quality of education across the key subjects, felt their children were well looked after and that the curriculum arrangements were appropriate. They felt teaching and learning were good. A small number disagreed and said that the use of ICT was poor, homework was inappropriate and that the range of extra-curricular activities were limited. Almost half of the parents who completed the survey had no knowledge of the school's approach to, or performance in, international tests. Teachers felt the school was led well and that their opinions were listened to by leaders. A fifth said their knowledge of the school's international assessment operations was low. They were happy with the professional development provided. Some concern was expressed about the provision for students with special educational needs. Students reported that they wanted a broader range of activities for girls, better catering facilities and more use of ICT in their learning. A few were concerned about the safety of students in school. Overall, they said they were happy with how they were taught.

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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