

INSPECTION REPORT

The City School International

Report published in April 2013

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The City School International

Location	Nad Al Hamar
Type of school	Private
Website	www.tcs-uae.com
Telephone	04-2899722
Address	PO Box 5760, Dubai
Principal	Sadia Wajid
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	4-17 / Kindergarten to Grade 11
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	425
Students' nationalities	Pakistani
Number of Emirati students	11 (3%)
Date of the inspection	8th to 10th October 2012

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The context of the school

The City School International, located in Nad Al Hamar, provided education for students from Kindergarten to Grade 11, ages four to 17 years of age. At the time of the inspection there were 425 students on roll.

The school served a multi-national community of students, predominantly Pakistanis, but also students from the UAE, other Arab nations, Iran, the United States, Canada, Australia and the Philippines. About three per cent of students were Emiratis. A total of fifteen students had been identified as having special educational needs. Their provision was supported by a learning support teacher as well as teacher assistants.

The school offered a UK curriculum leading to IGCSE examinations in Grade 11. At the time of the inspection there was a newly appointed Principal, and new phase leaders. There were new teachers and teacher assistants in the Foundation Stage and new teachers in the Islamic Education department. Almost all teachers held a first degree and had taken a range of professional development courses organised in partnership with the City Schools organisation, based in Pakistan.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The good progress and attainment of secondary students in English;
- The students' good behaviour and attitudes;
- The school's calm but purposeful working atmosphere;
- A dedicated team of enthusiastic teachers.

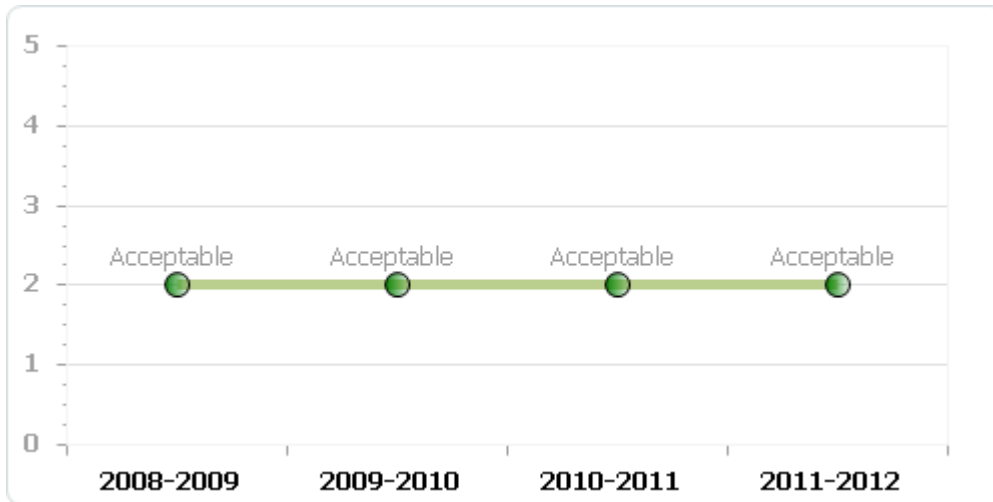
Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress in Arabic as a first and additional language in the secondary grades;
- Raise attainment and progress in mathematics and science in all phases and English attainment and progress in the Foundation Stage and primary grades;
- Improve teaching and learning through better use of assessment information to match the learning needs of all students and help them understand what they need to do to improve;
- Improve the planning of different tasks to ensure that all ability groups are sufficiently challenged;
- Improve the range of resources used to support activity-based learning, particularly in the Foundation Stage.

Progress since the last inspection

- Progress in English had improved in the secondary phase and was good;
- Students' behaviour and attitudes had improved and were good across all phases;
- There was improved teaching and learning in Foundation Stage;
- There was a broader range of curriculum choices for secondary students;
- Improved attendance and punctuality.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	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
Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Students' attainment in the key subjects varied, but was mostly acceptable. In Islamic Education most students demonstrated levels of knowledge and understanding that were in line with expectations. However, students' memorisation and recitation skills were weak. Attainment in Arabic as a first language and Arabic as an additional language varied. In the primary grades it was acceptable because students knew the basic grammar rules and could read with expression. However, it was unsatisfactory in the secondary grades because writing was poorly developed and limited by weak vocabulary. The speaking skills of students of Arabic as an additional language lacked confidence and accuracy. In English, most students demonstrated effective speaking, listening and reading skills, but writing was less secure. Secondary students, whose attainment was good, were yet to write at length, for different purposes, or for different audiences. In mathematics, students were strong in calculating. Their ability to solve real-life problems independently was mostly good but they were not confident when presenting data. Attainment was acceptable in science in all phases. Secondary students had well developed practical skills, but most students in all phases had insufficient opportunities to carry out their own scientific investigations, to think critically or to solve problems.

Students' progress in most subjects was acceptable across all phases. In Islamic Education, most students were making acceptable progress as measured against lesson objectives. However, skills of relating learning to real life application were not well developed. In Arabic as a first and as an additional language in the secondary phase, progress was unsatisfactory in oral and written expression. English in the Foundation Stage and secondary phases had seen improvement. In primary English lessons, writing was inhibited by an over-reliance on worksheets while in secondary grades, where progress was good, there was a strong emphasis on challenge, group work and skills. Progress in mathematics and science was acceptable in all phases, although the challenge for the most able students was inconsistent. Students with special educational needs made broadly acceptable progress, because not all students were given enough individual support.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students' attainment and progress were acceptable overall. Most students began school with low levels of English, but their ability in other subjects was similar to other students. They made steady progress through the school. It was strongest in Islamic Education. Girls performed better than boys in mathematics and science. Attendance was acceptable. Engagement in lessons and homework was acceptable in all phases. Reports to parents of lower phase students were informative and accurate. In the

senior phases, they also informed parents about what their children needed to do to improve. Increased numbers of Emirati parents were involved in their children's education in the Foundation Stage.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal and social development was good overall. Most students behaved extremely well in classes and moved around the school with a sense of calm. Relationships between teachers and students were very positive and students worked well with each other in groups. Student leaders played an active role in supervision at break times and dismissal, and supported other aspects of school life. Most students were well aware of the importance of healthy eating and exercise; most played sport regularly. Attendance and punctuality were acceptable. Students showed respect for Islam and most students recognised the underlying importance of their religion in guiding their everyday lives. Primary students demonstrated confident knowledge and understanding of the UAE's national culture and local traditions. Senior students showed mature understanding of global issues and how these were related to the development of the UAE. Most students understood the importance of protecting the environment at the local level and more broadly within the UAE community. The ecology-club was popular especially 'the green patch'. The older students understood the importance of environmental sustainability and the value of involvement in the community.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was of acceptable quality in all phases. Thoughtful planning with shared learning objectives allowed the effective delivery of lessons. In the Foundation Stage, the best teaching occurred when activities were planned with clear learning outcomes and lessons provided choice and independent learning. The range of teaching strategies employed was improving. In the best lessons, particularly in secondary English, the higher achieving students were involved in self-directed learning. There was scope for considerable improvement in secondary school Arabic as a first or additional language. There was an inconsistency in the teaching mathematics and science in all phases. In the majority of lessons there were opportunities to set different tasks to meet the range of students' needs.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable in all phases. Secure learning environments linked to positive teacher-student relationships promoted good interaction and discussion among students; this was especially evident in the secondary phase. In a few lessons the use of plenary sessions was effective. Students were encouraged to reflect on what they had learnt before their lessons ended. The best learning was observed when students were actively engaged in research; however, this was confined to a minority of secondary phase lessons. In English, lessons scope existed for the development of cross-

curricular links between subjects in order to extend the application of literacy skills. Most students engaged fully in group discussions and debates; as a result they enhanced their research, speaking and listening skills.

The assessment of learning was of acceptable quality overall. Effective systems for tracking students' progress provided teachers with awareness of their students' emerging needs. Assessment data was mostly accurate, but there was not enough analysis of key outcomes to guide decision-making. In both forms of Arabic there was very limited assessment. There was a difference between assessment in the primary and secondary grades. Most secondary teachers used data that ensured their planning met the needs of almost all groups of students. When given the opportunity, students were accurate in assessing their own learning and that of their peers. In the Foundation Stage, assessment was inconsistent and did not consistently relate to skills that required development, especially communication and expression. Teachers used the Early Years Goals to record progress, but inconsistent information gathering impeded guidance in their next steps of learning. Students were often unaware of what was required of them. A few examples of outstanding teacher marking were observed. Some students were responsive to their teachers' comments and aware of informal learning targets. This practice however, was not consistent across the school.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and primary phase and good in the secondary phase. It was broad and balanced. It was regularly reviewed and modified. There were good transitional arrangements between phases within the school and when students transferred to further education at the end of secondary phase. In the secondary phase the curriculum was comprised of a range of IGCSE courses. It was enhanced by an Environmental Management course for all students. The school enriched its curriculum with a number of visits and had recently introduced an extensive programme of weekly extra-curricular activities. Students in the secondary phase took part in Young Enterprise activities and a work experience programme. There were good links with universities in Dubai and abroad. However, the curriculum was insufficiently challenging to meet the needs of students of different abilities. There were examples of good practice in science when teachers attempted to produce work at different levels, but this was not common practice.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for students' health and safety was good. The resources, premises and facilities were well kept and designed to allow access to all. The premises were secure, and safety evacuation procedures took place. Buses were well organised, with adequate levels of supervision. The school nurse and visiting doctor were efficient in performing their duties and there was good support for students on an individual and group level. Medicines and students' personal records were kept securely. Healthy lifestyles were promoted through the curriculum and a range of out-of-school activities and healthy snacks were encouraged and available in the canteen. Knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures was consistent across the school for staff and students. It was supported by annual staff training.

The quality of support for students was acceptable. The relationships between staff and students were very positive. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour were dealt with quickly and sensitively. The tracking system ensured that students who attain below the expected levels received advice and support to address the gaps in their knowledge. Systems were in place to monitor attendance and punctuality. Parents and students are aware of the procedures for dealing with absenteeism. Students received advice on their own progress and, where appropriate, future educational and career opportunities.

[View judgements](#)

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

The identification of students with special educational needs was an integral aspect of the admission procedures. Support was also extended through in-school referrals from teachers. The school guidelines outlined identification processes, for example through the analysis of tracking data, and the results of reading tests. However, provision was inconsistent throughout the school. Training was being provided in an effort to improve the accuracy of identification processes and a more focused provision for students. Additional support was provided in withdrawal groups or through in-class support from the specialist. Students' progress was acceptable overall. It was better in English because of more focused support by specialist staff members and a range of strategies including, for example, phonics development activities for younger students.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership and management were acceptable. The newly appointed Principal had introduced a number of initiatives to support a three-year plan and address the recommendations from the previous inspection report. School leadership had been expanded with the appointment of Key Stage as well as subject leaders. From meetings with leaders, priorities had been identified and strategies implemented, such as improved Foundation Stage teaching and learning. Leadership teams had adequate levels of communication. Most staff members and children knew what was required of them. The Principal had high levels of expectations of both teachers and students. She had a developing understanding of good quality leadership and management and had begun to introduce a wide range of improvements.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. There was a strong commitment to school improvement by senior leaders based on shared values, a realistic vision and a clear understanding of what needed to improve. Senior leaders were flexible and had the students' interests at the forefront of their plans. The school had made a number of improvements in the last year, but not all challenges identified in the previous inspection report had been sufficiently addressed. There was improved attendance and punctuality. More purposeful, active learning was seen in the Foundation Stage as a result of changes made by school leaders.

Partnership with parents and the community was good. Parents were increasingly involved in more open contact with the school, through monthly coffee mornings. Most parents appreciated the approachability of the staff and the clear information about their children's progress through helpful monthly reports. Links with local businesses and other schools were underdeveloped.

Governance was acceptable. The City School's governor provided direction for the school and ensured most decisions were referenced to the needs of students. Leaders were held to account. However, governors did not sufficiently represent all stakeholders, nor did they effectively seek or respond constructively to stakeholders' views.

Management including staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. The school had invested well in resources, both human and physical. Most teachers were better qualified and most had good subject knowledge and knew how students learn best. The building was sizeable, with an acceptable range of facilities that included an information and communications technology suite. There was a spacious library which had an adequate range of books. Learning resources in the primary and secondary grades were used for an action-based approach. In the Foundation Stage, resources were not adequate and did not always match children's needs.

[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	67	25%
	Last year	137	33%
Teachers	34		87%
Students	50		89%

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

A minority of parents responded to the survey, slightly fewer than last year. A minority of teachers and senior students responded to their surveys. Most parents agreed that their children were making good progress in the key subjects, with the exception of Arabic language. Most thought that their children enjoyed school and were safe there, and that students' behaviour was at least good. Almost all parents indicated that the school was well led. The majority of parents agreed that their children were getting the education they expected from the school. Most teachers were concerned about the lack of resources available to do their jobs well. Almost all students agreed that they were making good progress in most of the key subjects, other than Arabic. They expressed concern about the quality of teaching they received in this subject. Students reported that, overall, the school had improved since last year.

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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