

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Cambridge International School

Report published in April 2013

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

P.O. Box 500008, UAE, Tel: +971-4-3640000, Fax: +971-4-3640001, [info@khda.gov.ae](mailto:info@khda.gov.ae), [www.khda.gov.ae](http://www.khda.gov.ae)

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Cambridge International School

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemscis-dubai.com
Telephone	04-2824646
Address	P O Box 60835, Dubai
Principal	David John McLaughlin
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten 1 to Grade 13
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	2,512
Largest nationality group of students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	37 (2%)
Date of the inspection	14th to 18th October 2012

## Contents

The context of the school.....	3
Overall school performance 2012-2013 .....	3
Key strengths .....	4
Recommendations .....	4
Progress since the last inspection .....	5
Trend of overall performance.....	5
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	6
How good is the students' personal and social development? .....	7
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment? .....	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students? .....	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school? .....	8
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	9
How well does the school provide for Emirati students?.....	10
How good is the students' personal and social development? .....	10
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment? .....	11
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students? .....	12
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	12
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	13
How good are the leadership and management of the school? .....	13
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	15
What happens next? .....	16
How to contact us .....	16

## The context of the school

Cambridge International School is located in Al Garhoud. The students were primarily of Indian nationality, with approximately 80 nationalities represented in the total school population. The school catered for students from three to 18 years of age. Students were enrolled from all areas of Dubai and included students with special educational needs.

The school followed the National Curriculum for England. Students sat for the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and/or GCSE examinations near the end of the secondary phase and GCE Advanced Level examinations at the conclusion of the post-16 phase.

The school was organised into four phases consisting of the Foundation Stage, and primary, secondary and post-16 phases, grouped into 72 classes. At the time of the inspection, there were 132 full-time teachers which included most of the leadership team and 42 learning support advisors who worked with students with special educational needs. Two additional teaching staff had been employed but had not yet arrived. Twenty four teachers were new to the school in September.

The school had 37 Emirati students which comprised approximately two per cent of the student population. The school enrolled an additional 159 students during the 2012-2013 academic year, which reflected an approximate eight per cent increase over the previous year.

## Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

## Key strengths

- A pervading ethos of mutual respect and care among staff and students;
- Good or better attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science;
- Broad range of curricular provision in secondary and post-16 tailored to the needs of students;
- Outstanding parental engagement;
- Strong provision for the identification and monitoring of progress of students with special educational needs.

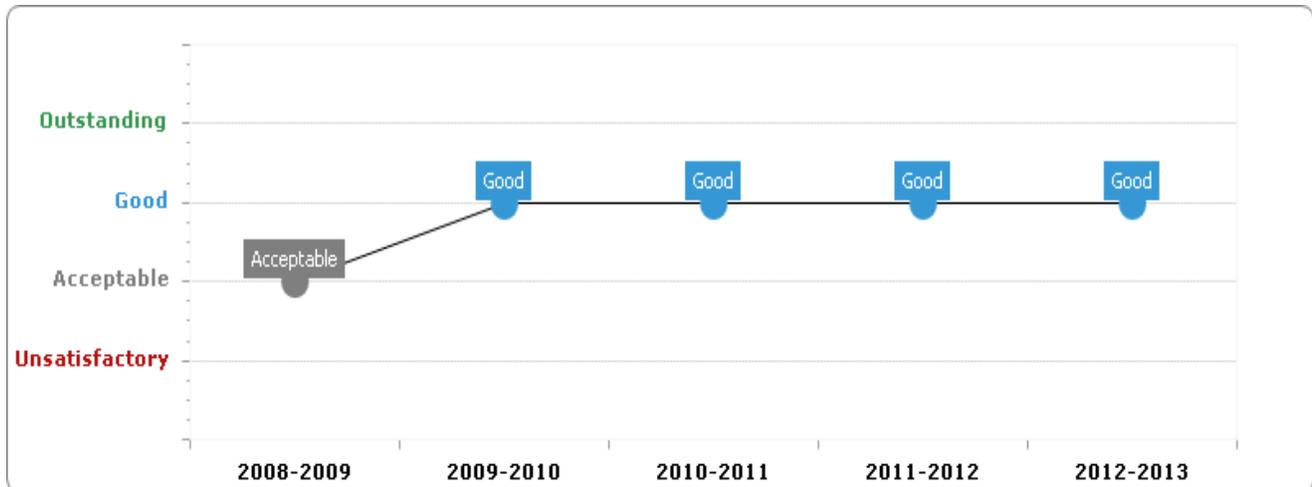
## Recommendations

- Continue to improve attainment for Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Utilise existing best practice within the school to improve consistency and raise the quality of teaching, particularly in the primary phase;
- Build on the established self-evaluation process to identify more accurately the key priorities for improvement within the school.

## Progress since the last inspection

- The school had tackled all of the identified recommendations from the previous inspection, but had not yet successfully resolved them, except for improved attainment and progress in primary Arabic;.
- Progress in English for secondary and post-16 students had improved;
- The attitudes and behaviour of primary and secondary students were now good or better;
- The support for secondary and post-16 students had become outstanding;
- Plans for a new facility to address the issue of class size had been put in place.

## Trend of overall performance



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
<b>Islamic Education</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>English</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Progress</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Mathematics</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Science</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable at all levels. Most students had appropriate factual knowledge of the different aspects of Islam. However, making connections between these aspects was not well developed. Attainment in both Arabic as a first and an additional language was good in the primary phase and acceptable in the secondary and post-16 phases. The most developed skill was listening. In writing, most students could copy from the book but independent writing skills were limited. Students' grammatical understanding was acceptable. In English, attainment was outstanding across the primary, secondary and post-16 phases and good in the Foundation Stage. Students had very well developed communication skills and could speak confidently and at length on different topics using a rich vocabulary often above expectations for their age. Their creative writing was imaginative with a wide descriptive vocabulary, but in some instances writing was not well formed and presentation and spelling were poor. Attainment in mathematics in relation to international standards was good across all phases of the school. In science, attainment was good at all levels. Most students achieved at, or above, expected levels. For example, Foundation Stage children could identify and speak about features of cold places; upper primary students made hypotheses about evaporation; students experimented with speed and velocity in secondary classes and post-16 students carried out research about bio-molecules in biology classes.

Progress in Islamic Education was good in all phases. Students developed their understanding of Islamic values such as respecting others and in developing their knowledge of rituals and their Holy Qur'an recitation skills. In Arabic as a first and additional language, progress was good in the primary phase and acceptable in the other phases. Most students in the primary phase did not rely on English to understand the language as much as older students and were more fluent in speaking than them. Independent writing skills were limited. Progress in English was outstanding in all phases. Students' analytical and comprehension skills were developing well. In all phases, they built on previous learning and communicated well with their peers and their teachers. However, not all students were able to extract information from texts or adapt their writing for different purposes. Progress in mathematics was good across all phases. Students did not develop their skills in discussion and active learning enough through practical work. In science, progress was good in the Foundation Stage and primary phase, and outstanding elsewhere. In the secondary and post-16 phases, the rate of progress accelerated, particularly commendable when considering the numbers of new students entering the school and their range of abilities in these phases.

[View judgements](#)

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

Emirati students' attainment and progress were good in English, mathematics and science. In Islamic Education they made good progress and acceptable attainment, although their attainment was slightly better than their peers. In Arabic, they made acceptable attainment and progress overall, although primary students were better than other Emirati students across the school. Students' achievement in English was best in listening and speaking. Students were punctual and had an outstanding attendance. They were well behaved and enjoyed positive relationships with their teachers and peers. Almost all of them had positive attitudes toward learning, and had a good work ethic. Parental involvement was outstanding, particularly parents of students with special needs; they praised the school's admission policy and the support provided for their child.

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

In the Foundation Stage, secondary and post-16 phases, almost all students were disciplined, courteous and their behaviour was exemplary. Primary students demonstrated good behaviour with mature and sensible attitudes, but required occasional supervision and direction. Relationships with other students and staff were respectful and they demonstrated positive attitudes towards healthy living. Older students actively took on responsibility and leadership roles and acted as ambassadors for their school through active participation in initiatives within and outside the school community. Attendance and punctuality were outstanding. Students demonstrated good understanding of UAE family traditions and highlighted clear similarities and differences from their own backgrounds. They linked their understanding with Islamic awareness and valued, appreciated and praised the Emiratis' strong attachment to their culture within a wider Dubai. Most students had appropriate knowledge of the UAE's heritage. In the Foundation Stage, almost all children followed routines to take care of their own clothes, and actively tidied up after break times and end of the school day. They participated actively in practical projects promoting environmental activities. In the secondary and post-16 phases, students were very knowledgeable and actively participated in community and environment initiatives. They had a strong work ethic and high aspirations for the future. Students showed an excellent understanding of environmental sustainability and took care of their immediate environment.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was acceptable in the primary phase and good in all other phases. Teachers showed secure subject knowledge and planned their lessons appropriately. Foundation Stage teachers displayed a good understanding of how young children learn, used computer technology to stimulate discussion and encouraged exploration and creativity. Across the school, the better lessons were well structured and appropriately varied with effective review opportunities on completion. In a few successful lessons, for example in upper school English, students were encouraged to take the lead in the lesson and teachers adopted a facilitating role in order to promote independent learning. By contrast, weaker lessons tended to be poorly managed and dominated by teacher talk, leaving insufficient time for active student engagement. These lessons often lacked pace and challenge, particularly for the more able students. Teaching seen in lessons of drama, world studies and physical education was good.

The quality of students' learning reflected the quality of teaching. Across the school, students were self-motivated and keen to make progress in their studies. They were responsive to their teachers and showed interest in their lessons across the curriculum. Students generally collaborated well with each other in groups, listened attentively and took a mature and sensitive approach when given the opportunity to appraise each -others' work. On a number of occasions, students with additional learning needs were supported by their peers. In the early and middle years, students' enquiry and investigational skills were underdeveloped. A significant number of students were taught in large classes with limited space and, as a result, interactive and group learning was difficult to organise. However, as they moved up the school, students took greater responsibility for their own learning and were able to demonstrate appropriate critical thinking and research skills.

Assessment was good across all phases of the school. Systems to record students' performance were robust and comprehensive, and were effectively supported by commercial and school-based computer software. Individual students' achievements were closely monitored and rates of progress tracked across the range of subjects. This rich source of data was not consistently used by teachers in their lesson planning in order to meet the needs of all students across the ability range. Teacher-designed assessments were cross-checked at key points against internationally recognised benchmarks. In lessons, teachers' questioning was effective in assessing prior learning. More extended questioning, to encourage deeper thinking and reflection, was observed in a minority of lessons, mainly in English. Student self-assessment and peer assessment were at an early stage of development.

[View judgements](#)

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

The broad and balanced curriculum had a clear rationale based on the English National Curriculum which provided a good range of subject choices and progression opportunities. Good planning ensured that students were well prepared to move smoothly between phases. The curriculum was reviewed annually. Amendments made in Years 1 and 2 were being implemented but it was too early to see the full impact. The alternative vocational pathway at post-16 had been extended to secondary students resulting in a greater choice of subjects, and an increase in the number of students taking these courses. The blend of academic and vocational courses offered excellent opportunities to develop students' independent learning, research and critical thinking skills and provided them with valuable skills for life-long learning or the world of work. Very effective provision for students with special educational needs ensured they had greater access to the curriculum. Students benefited from a wide programme of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Strong community links with global enterprises added value to this program. The leadership programme in the post-16 and secondary phases provided students with the opportunity to take on extra responsibility, developing them into mature and confident young people with a strong work ethic.

[View judgements](#)

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

Measures to ensure the health and safety of students across the school were good in all phases. Two senior members of the leadership team had been appointed to oversee this vital aspect of school operations. The school had made all staff aware of the comprehensive policies that cover health and safety, including child protection. Almost all students had excellent relationships with their teachers, and there were clear procedures for gaining assistance from appropriate, qualified staff when necessary. The system of student arrival and dismissal was very efficient and safe. Students each had a bar-coded pass, which provided fast information to the school. A minority of parents ignored school safety directions in the car park needed attention. A fire evacuation during the inspection visit was conducted quickly and efficiently. In response to parent and student requests, improvements to canteen menus had resulted in healthier choices of food. Areas around drinking fountains were clean, as were most toilets, but there was still room for improvement. Almost all students moved around the school safely, despite the crowded conditions. A doctor and three nurses operated a secure medical facility and kept comprehensive records. They liaised with the senior leadership team regularly and contacted parents promptly when needed.

Teachers knew their students very well and provided continuity of support in their social, personal and academic needs. As a result, students were well behaved and respectful of adults and each other. The school's priority to improve attendance and punctuality further had had a noticeable, positive impact. Students had opportunities to access a wide range of effective guidance in personal, subject and career advice.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school had rigorous procedures for early identification of students with special educational needs. Specialist provision was outstanding. The range and complexity of students' needs was well understood and their progress was monitored and tracked carefully. Overall, individual students were well supported in class, including by 'shadow' assistants. Effective, daily communication was maintained with parents. Secondary and post-16 students achieved very positive outcomes. Students had less consistent provision in classes in the Foundation Stage and primary phase where tasks and activities did not always match specific individual needs.

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

The leadership of the school was good with some outstanding features. The Principal and the leadership team had a clear focus on all aspects of school operation. Senior leaders used a highly effective distributive leadership model to develop and share an effective school vision. A caring, secure climate permeated the school. Both internal and external communications regarding the success and needs of the school were highly developed. The leadership team demonstrated the capacity for effective school improvement, although planning was not always clearly linked to the outcomes for students.

Self-evaluation was good. Systematic improvement planning addressed all the recommendations from the previous report. The action plan and supporting strategies were clearly stated and shared with all staff and premised on available data, demonstrating for the teaching staff the effective use of data to focus and improve student learning. Self-evaluation had resulted in measureable improvement in several areas of the curriculum, and teaching and learning. This process provided the framework for continued curriculum and instructional improvement in areas which are not quite as progressed on the journey.

Parental engagement was outstanding. The school parents organisation was encouraged to be involved in their child's school and seminars were held frequently assist them in helping their children at home. Parents were very pleased with the ease and highly effective communication opportunities with their child's teachers and the school staff in general. School reports of student progress were timely and in written, verbal and electronic format to reach all parents. Also, the welcoming attitude and consistent methods of communications made the parents feel as an integral part of the school. Exceptional links existed between the school, parents and greater community.

School governance was good. The board of governors had a positive influence on the school. Regular meetings with senior leaders were held to review action plans and areas of mutual concern. The board of governors provided high quality training programmes that addressed the identified needs of the staff. This enabled the school leadership to plan and implement effective programmes and processes and be held accountable for the outcomes. Parent representation was carried out indirectly as parents did not serve on the governing board.

The management of the school was good. Effective procedures and routines supported the overall management of the school. All staff were appropriately certified, deployed and supported by strong effective professional development model. Staff turnover was low and additional staff was hired to address overcrowding in several classrooms. The school facility was safe and well maintained. The library/Learning Centre served as an attractive, useful addition to the school. The parents' coffee chop supported the positive ethos of parent involvement. Computer laboratories were well equipped and maintained. Overall, the school was well supplied with resources. However, the school was crowded and the classroom sizes limited the effectiveness of instruction in many cases. Plans for a new building were in place to address the overcrowding issue.

[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	305	16%
	Last year	337	19%
Teachers	37		24%
Students	45		11%

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

A smaller minority of parents responded to the survey this year than last. A small minority of teachers and students responded to their surveys. Overall responses to the surveys were very positive and most identified English and mathematics as the subjects where parents felt their children were making most progress. Almost all respondents felt their children enjoyed school and were safe and appreciated. They reported that communication was strong and the school was well led. Most felt that the teaching and learning were good. Students' responses mirrored those of the parents in almost all categories. A few concerns were expressed on the hygiene of toilets, drinking fountains and insufficient shade for eating. Additionally, a minority of parents stated that most of the Arabic teachers did not speak English well, limiting students' ability to gain understanding in their non-native tongue. The issue of class size was cited as a problem by a few parents.

## What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau**

**Knowledge and Human Development Authority**

## How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:  
[inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

**Copyright © 2013**

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school.  
It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.