

Inspection Report



Uptown School

2014-2015



إكسبو 2020 دبي
دبي، الإمارات العربية المتحدة
DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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School information



General information

Location	Mirdiff
Type of school	Private
Opening year of school	2012
Website	www.uptownschool.ae
Telephone	04-2515001
Address	Mirdif, Tripoli Street, 788181 Dubai
Principal	Timothy Waley
Language of instruction	English
Inspection dates	27 th - 30 th October 2014



Students

Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age range	3 - 16
Grades or year groups	Pre-K - Grade 10
Number of students on roll	1251
Number of children in Pre-K	49
Number of Emirati students	239
Number of students with SEN	77
Largest nationality group of students	Emirati



Teachers / Support staff

Number of teachers	107
Largest nationality group of teachers	British
Number of teacher assistants	38
Teacher-student ratio	1:14
Number of guidance counsellors	2
Teacher turnover	19%



Curriculum

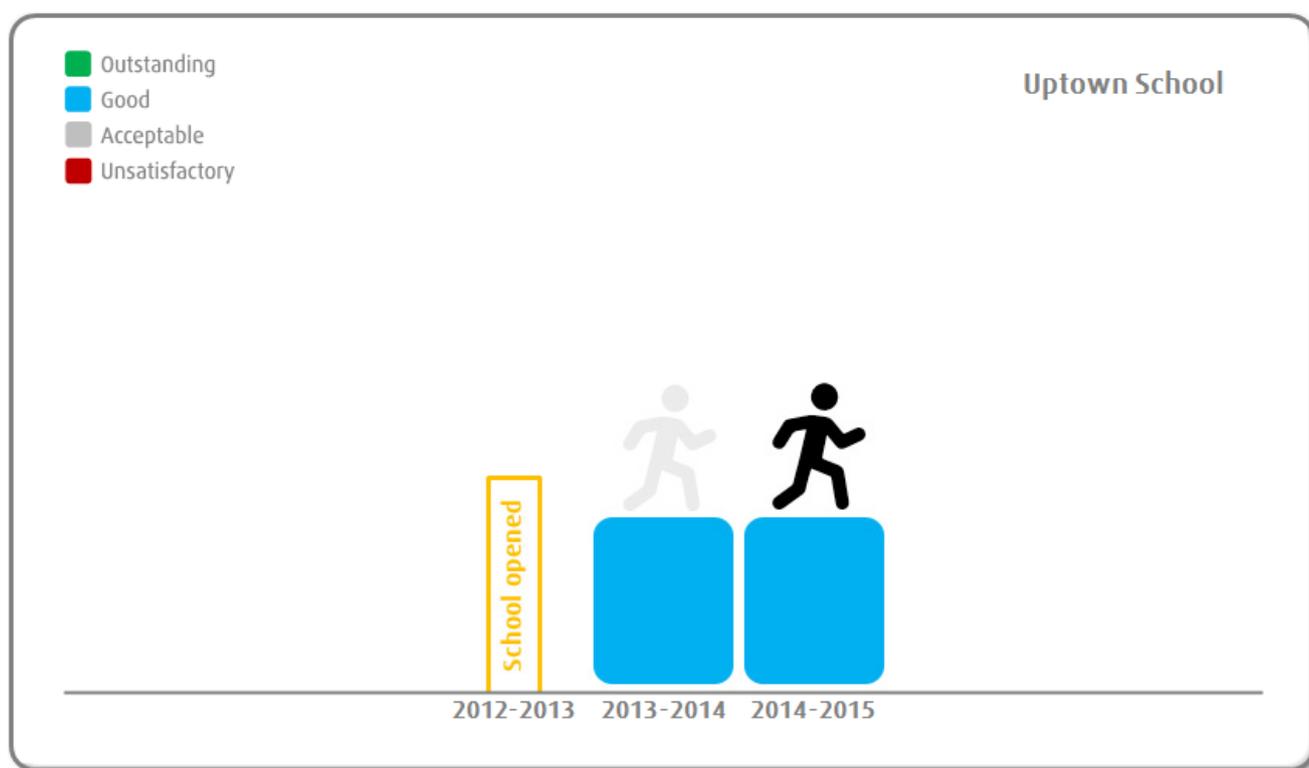
Educational Permit	IB
Main Curriculum / Other	IB
Standardised tests / board exams	IBT
Accreditation	PYP, MYP, DP (waiting for authorisation)



Dear Parents,

Uptown School was inspected by DSIB from 27th - 30th October 2014, and the overall quality of education provided by the school was found to be **Good**

In order to judge the overall quality of education provided by the school, inspectors considered six key aspects of the school's performance and standards. Inspectors looked at children's attainment and progress in five key subjects, their learning skills as well as their personal and social development. They judged how effective teaching was across the school. Inspectors considered how well the school's curriculum, including activities inside and outside the classroom, met the educational needs of all children. They judged how well the school protected and supported children. In addition inspectors judged the effectiveness of leadership and governance, including management, staffing, facilities and resources.



The inspection judgements were drawn from a range of evidence gathered by the inspection team, including observing children learning in lessons, looking at their work, talking with children, meetings with staff, parents and governors, and reviewing the parents' and teachers' surveys.

The key strengths and areas for improvement to be made by the school leaders, governors and owners are:

Strengths

- The outstanding provision in the Kindergarten helped all children to develop and prepared them well for the next stage of their learning.
- In the Kindergarten and the Primary Years Programme (PYP), students' attainment and progress in all subjects was good.
- There was a well-structured and broad curriculum which catered for the different needs of the majority of students in all phases.
- The strategic approach to teaching Arabic in the Kindergarten resulted in good outcomes and contributed well to developing students' understanding of Islamic and cultural values.
- Students demonstrated excellent attitudes to learning and were growing into confident and inquisitive learners.

Areas for improvement

- Improve students' attainment and progress in key subjects in the Middle Years Programme (MYP).
- Improve students' mathematical skills across the school and Arabic writing skills in the MYP.
- Improve students' understanding of International Baccalaureate (IB) key concepts.
- Ensure consistency in the quality of support for students with special educational needs.

We warmly encourage you to read the full school inspection report.

The school is required to submit to DSIB an action plan identifying the steps they will take to address the areas for improvement. We have advised your school leaders to share this with you.

We trust that the information provided will help you understand, and encourages you to support, your child's school.

Yours sincerely,

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

A closer look at Uptown School



How well does the school perform overall?

Overall, Uptown School provided a **Good** quality of education for its students.

- Students' attainment and progress were mostly good. Students whose first language was not English were very well catered for and as a result made significant progress from their starting points. Students in all phases were proactive learners. They responded well to high expectations and developed research and critical thinking skills. In most lessons, students made good use of technology and other resources to investigate and present their findings. They worked co-operatively in groups and applied their knowledge to real world experiences.
- Most students demonstrated excellent behaviour and attitudes towards learning. They understood Islamic values, appreciated the culture of the UAE and demonstrated good awareness of their own and other world cultures. Students had an outstanding positive work ethic. They showed an excellent understanding of their responsibilities as members of the community and took the initiative towards the preservation of the environment and the conservation of its resources.
- Teachers had good subject knowledge and in a very supportive climate encouraged students to be experts in their learning. This was particularly the case in the Kindergarten. The school used a variety of assessment strategies to regularly assess students' learning.
- The curriculum was diverse and reviewed regularly. In the Kindergarten, it met the interests, learning styles and learning needs of all students. In the PYP, Units of Inquiry provided opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking. In the MYP, students were offered a broad range of subjects. There was a wide-range of extra-curricular activities available to all students.
- Safeguarding procedures were in place, regularly checked and updated. As a result, all students were safe and well looked after by the school staff. Excellent relationships in the school ensured the needs of almost all students were met. The counsellor provided outstanding support for students and parents. Students with special educational needs were well identified and supported in the Kindergarten and in the PYP. In the MYP, students with English as a second language were well supported but more support was needed for those with special educational needs.
- The leadership team, through their thorough planning and monitoring, had ensured students' personal and academic outcomes were secured as the school was extending into a Diploma Programme (DP) section. Resources for learning, including teachers, were increasing rapidly and were deployed effectively around the new school sites.

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



- Students with special educational needs made good progress in English and Islamic Education. Their progress was less secure in mathematics and science, where their key skills were less developed.
- The school had a thorough system for informing parents of their children's progress and this included meetings when an individual education plan (IEP) was being prepared.
- Curriculum modification and adaptation were strongest in the Kindergarten and the PYP, where planning was more focused on the principles of the International Baccalaureate curriculum, and priority was given to providing students with a highly differentiated approach to their learning.

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

		Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
 Islamic Education	Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
	Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good
 Arabic as a First Language	Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
	Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good
 Arabic as an Additional Language	Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
	Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable
 English	Attainment	Good	Good	Good 
	Progress	Good	Good	Good
 Mathematics	Attainment	Good	Good	Acceptable 
	Progress	Good	Good	Good
 Science	Attainment	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	Good	Good	Good
		Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Learning skills		Outstanding 	Good	Good

 Improved from last inspection

 Declined from last inspection

2. How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Outstanding 	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

3. How good are teaching and assessment?

	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good

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

	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

5. How well does the school protect and support students?

	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good

6. How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	All phases
The effectiveness of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
Parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Outstanding
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

Overall school judgement

Good

Key strengths

- The outstanding provision in the Kindergarten contributed well to developing children's social, emotional and academic skills.
- The focused teaching and learning in English enabled all students to make rapid progress from their diverse starting points.
- Students demonstrated excellent learning attitudes and were growing into confident and inquisitive learners.
- The strategic approach to teaching Arabic in the Kindergarten resulted in good outcomes and contributed well to developing their understanding of Islamic and cultural values.
- The outstanding curriculum catered for the diversity of students' needs.

Changes since the last inspection

- In the MYP, students' attainment in English and mathematics had improved.
- In the Kindergarten, children's learning skills and their understanding of local and world cultures were outstanding.

Recommendations

- Continue to raise the attainment and progress of students in the MYP.
- Improve students' numeracy and literacy skills across the school, and improve students' Arabic writing skills in the MYP.
- Further develop students' understanding of International Baccalaureate (IB) key concepts.
- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of support provided for students with special educational needs across the school.

 Improved from last inspection

 Declined from last inspection

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

Kindergarten

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic Education	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as a First Language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an Additional Language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
English	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Good	Good

- In English, the majority of children in Kindergarten 1 had developed confidence with the basic skills of speaking and listening. They used learning technologies to record findings from simple research. In Kindergarten 2, they had extended their skills to letter recognition and simple sentences.
- By the end of Kindergarten 2, the majority of children had made good progress in numerical skills. They counted accurately and recognised differences in quantity when comparing sets of objects. In a range of mathematical activities and during developmental play, they could confidently make links between mathematics and real life.
- In Science lessons and assessments, majority of children demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills that were above international standards. They were keen to observe, investigate and record their findings.

PYP

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic Education	Good	Good
Arabic as a First Language	Good	Good
Arabic as an Additional Language	Good	Good
English	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Good	Good

- In Islamic Education, most students had good knowledge about the key principles of faith and worship in Islam. However, their progress in the memorisation and application of the recitation rules of the Holy Qur'an was underdeveloped.
- In Arabic as a first language, most students had developed their listening and responding skills. They showed good knowledge of Arabic grammar. However, creative and extended writing and speaking skills were less well developed. Most students made good progress in developing their Arabic vocabulary but lacked the confidence to apply it fluently in discussion. Students did not progress well in writing and speaking as they were not given opportunities to engage actively in challenging activities.
- In Arabic as an additional language, listening and responding were the most developed skills and most students understood standard spoken Arabic. However, students had limited opportunities to develop independent or creative writing skills.

- In English, almost all students had developed good grammatical skills and by Grade 5 were using well-developed skills of reading for information and research, writing, speaking, listening and presenting.
- In mathematics, students' attainment throughout the PYP was above expected levels in independent learning skills, problem-solving and collaboration and this ensured good progress for students of all abilities. Students in Grade 4 and Grade 5 could use different methods to add and subtract, and perform short multiplication and division calculations. They could identify and define proper and improper fractions and reduce them to their simplest form; use negative numbers; identify the properties of different shapes; and work confidently with data.
- In science, most students demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills that were above international standards. The majority of students achieved above the regional norm in external tests.

MYP		
Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic Education	Acceptable	Good
Arabic as a First Language	Acceptable	Good
Arabic as an Additional Language	Acceptable	Acceptable
English	Good 	Good
Mathematics	Acceptable 	Good
Science	Good	Good

- In Islamic Education, most students had good knowledge of Islam's etiquette and values. They were able to explain concepts such as humility and the etiquette of reciting from the Holy Qur'an. However, only a few students could relate those values to their daily life.
- In Arabic as a first language, students were able to listen for different purposes and respond accordingly. Their speaking skills were not developed and students struggled to speak standard Arabic. Students were not able to produce extended and creative writing texts. Students progressed steadily in reading for comprehension but progress in writing was slower as students did not have enough opportunities for extended writing.
- In Arabic as an additional language, students were able to listen to instructions and respond accordingly but their speaking skills were confined to the use of simple vocabulary and short phrases. Their writing was limited to specific structured patterns. In almost all lessons, students made progress in extending their Arabic vocabulary but lacked the confidence to apply and extend speaking skills when interacting with others. The lack of opportunities for writing resulted in their writing skills being under developed
- In English, students in both Language A and Language B classes used literary texts well to develop skills of research, analysis and critical thinking. They shared their findings, thoughts and opinions confidently with others.
- In mathematics, most students had skills in mental calculations and algebraic equations that were in line with curriculum expectations and a minority of students displayed well-developed analytic, associative, enquiry and problem solving skills.
- In science, most students demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills that were above international standards. However, performance was better in lower grades than in higher grades. The majority of students had developed their enquiry and critical thinking skills across a range of scientific concepts and achieved above the regional norm in external tests.

	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Learning skills	Outstanding 	Good	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Kindergarten, children were highly creative and were able to think critically. They made choices in research using a wide range of resources. They referred to prior knowledge and related their learning to real world experiences. • In PYP and MYP lessons, students were enthusiastic and confidently shared their learning with others. • Students responded well to challenges and developed critical thinking and analytical skills during many lessons. • Collaborative group work was a feature of almost all lessons and students made good use of learning technologies to relate their learning to the real world. 			

2. How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In almost all lessons, students exhibited very positive attitudes and high levels of responsibility towards their own learning. • Behaviour was excellent inside and outside of the classrooms. • Students were supportive of each other and sensitive to others' needs. They were very articulate and expressive. • Commitment to a healthy lifestyle was evident in student choices and was also embedded in the curriculum. • Attendance was good and almost all students arrived punctually to classes. 			

	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Outstanding 	Good	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Kindergarten, children demonstrated a strong understanding of Islam. They talked clearly about Islamic values such as kindness and cooperation and they had clear knowledge of the traditions and heritage of Dubai. • Students in the PYP and the MYP demonstrated a good understanding of Islamic values and their impact on contemporary society in Dubai and the wider world. They could make links between Islam and many of the local traditions. • They showed respect for and good understanding of the traditions and heritage of the UAE. However, they showed limited awareness of other cultures and their influences from around the world. 			

	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students showed outstanding understanding of their responsibilities as members of the community, exemplified by their dedication to preserving the environment and conserving its resources. The students, through the newly formed Student Council, were keen to add value to school projects and to contribute to the decision making in the school. Environmental awareness was stronger in the MYP, where students could clearly identify issues relating to Dubai, for example, the population explosion linked to its development as a tourist resort. They could also identify strategies to alleviate some of the environmental problems. In the PYP, although students had started some projects such as 'Habitat and Pollution', they found it difficult to elaborate on the environmental changes that had taken place due to construction works in Dubai and were unable to articulate solutions to these problems. 			

3. How good are teaching and assessment?

	kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of teaching was good in all phases in English but variable in mathematics and science in the PYP and the MYP. Teachers in the Kindergarten had developed creative learning environments and demonstrated a very secure understanding of how children learn. Lesson planning was varied, engaged students' interest, intellect and creativity, and involved a range of activities, resources and groupings that maintained a strong momentum for learning. Teacher-student interaction was outstanding. The supportive climate for active learning was evident in almost all lessons and enabled the majority of students to make good progress in the key subjects. Teachers had good subject knowledge and adapted instruction to make the content of lessons relevant and meaningful to meet the needs of different groups of students. Students in all phases were expected to investigate, question, analyse and work both independently and collaboratively, taking responsibility for their own learning. Learning technologies were used to promote high quality critical thinking and research skills and were highly valued as a key teaching strategy in the Kindergarten. In Arabic as a first language, teaching was engaging and reflected the teachers' understanding of how students learn. A variety of strategies was used to make an impact on students' learning, which resulted in their good progress. 			

	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Assessment	Good	Good	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal assessment processes were good in the Kindergarten and the PYP and valid, reliable data linked to the school's curriculum were now available to teachers and students in the MYP. International benchmarks were used and results scrutinised and analysed in order to inform a more targeted approach to teaching and learning. The tracking of students' academic progress over time was well organised. However, the school was less successful in tracking the non-academic skills of students. Assessment information was used to meet the needs of students with individual education plans. For other students, however, the data were less effectively analysed or used as a guide to prioritise better outcomes in numeracy and scientific skills. Teachers had good knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses, especially in English language lessons. Student self and peer assessment was used in the PYP but was less evident in the MYP where there had been a significant increase in numbers of students and new teachers. 			

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

	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The curriculum was wide-ranging and age-appropriate. It was structured systematically so students learned progressively. The curriculum was sufficiently diverse to engage all students. Cross-curricular links were well developed but not made sufficiently explicit to students. The curriculum was regularly reviewed to ensure it remained relevant and met the needs and interests of the students. The curriculum in Arabic as a first language was enriched with extra materials such as short stories and novels that targeted the desired improvement in students' attainment. However, there was no clear alignment of the Ministry of Education document with the IB framework. 			

	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The curriculum was thoroughly planned to support the interests, learning styles and learning needs of a range of students. The IB curriculum framework ensured that a broad range of subjects across all areas was offered to all students. There was a wide range of extra-curricular activities and community links that enhanced student learning. The school offered one 45-minute Arabic language lesson per week for all 122 children in the Kindergarten. Classes were combined for Arabs and non-Arabs and the programme targeted basic vocabulary and common phrases at non-native level. 			

5. How well does the school protect and support students?

	kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff and students were fully aware of child protection arrangements. Arrangements to ensure students' health, safety and security were outstanding throughout the school. The health care provision was excellent and medical facilities were staffed by a well-qualified team who maintained accurate records of any incidents and subsequent actions. The school's campus and facilities were spacious, well-maintained and provided an outstanding environment well suited to the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs. The school provided a healthy food choice for lunch and healthy living was promoted throughout the curriculum. 			

	Kindergarten	PYP	MYP
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were excellent relationships between staff and students. Recently appointed grade leaders and counsellors ensured students' emotional wellbeing and their engagement with learning. The school succeeded in promoting good attendance and punctuality. Students with a wide range of special educational needs were identified and supported well in the Kindergarten and the PYP. In the MYP, students with English as an additional language were exceptionally well supported. However, support for students with special educational needs was less effective. Support for transition between phases was good and preparation for further education and life beyond school was developing to meet the needs of older students in the MYP. 			

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

	Overall
The overall effectiveness of provision for students with special educational needs	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior leaders and governors demonstrated strong commitment to quality provision for students with special educational needs. There was considerable investment in the resourcing and deployment of key specialist staff, especially for literacy support, and the appointment of specialist staff to support numeracy was identified as a priority. The school policy for the identification of special educational needs was comprehensive and inclusive in practice. Curriculum modifications were made and the school provided a good level of resources to care for and support the education of students with special educational needs. 	

- The school had a thorough system for informing parents of their child's progress. This included personal meetings and more formal contacts when an individual education plan was being prepared.
- The tracking of students' academic progress over time was well organised. Progress in English and Islamic Education was good. Progress in mathematics and science was somewhat slower.

6. How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Overall
The effectiveness of leadership	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leaders had a clear vision and were dedicated to improving the school at all levels. • The leadership team was focused and roles and responsibilities had been distributed strategically. The leadership in some subjects, for example, Islamic Education and Arabic, was improving but inconsistencies between phases were observed. • Communication was effective across the phases and staff and students had a clear sense of direction. • The school demonstrated a strong capacity to sustain the outstanding grades from the previous inspection and improvements of weaker areas were noted. 	

	Overall
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school had a collegiate approach to self-evaluation in all phases. • A robust vertical reporting system enabled the two senior leaders to monitor the progress of their priorities for improvement. • The staff appraisal system and professional development were purposeful and targeted specific areas of development. However, performance management targets did not always hold teachers to account for their impact on students' outcomes. • The school had sustained its outstanding grades and made progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous report. 	

	Overall
Parents and the community	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were highly effective and productive links with parents that had a positive impact on students' outcomes. For example, parent teaching assistants and coaches supported specific areas of the school and 'link parents' provided a strong voice for each of the grade levels. Initiatives such as 'the second-hand clothes shop' provided additional funds for charities and the 'pink day' supported other parents in need. The Parents' School Advisory Board supported and guided the Principal's vision. • Communication between the school, the parents and the community was strong and frequent. • Student progress reports were regular and included clear targets for improvement. • Extensive partnerships with other schools and the community played a significant part in students' lives. 	

	Overall
Governance	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental views were sought regularly through various channels. The parents advised the governing board via the Principal. Governors responded well to parental requests and concerns. • New tools to ensure accountability were varied and efficient. For example, the governing board had refined its induction process for new teachers, a key area of focus for the school. The new governing board was very proactive in ensuring the school was meeting its targets • The governing board ensured resources were varied and deployed effectively to improve the school performance and enhance students' outcomes. 	

	Overall
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of day-to day operations and procedures were effective and efficient, providing an engaging environment for students. • Staff were well-qualified and opportunities for further professional development were available. • The premises were of the highest standard. The school was very well resourced. • Plans were in place to further develop learning technologies and to disseminate more resources for learning across the expanding campus. 	

What are the views of the Principal, parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of the Principal, parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form inspection 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	183	20%
	Last year	121	17%
 Teachers	53		50%
 Students	16		94%

- Almost all students, the majority of teachers and a minority of parents responded to the surveys. Feedback from all was highly positive overall.
- Parents raised concerns about attainment and progress in mathematics and science; inconsistencies in the quality of teaching; a lack of books and resources in the MYP.
- Teachers requested more quality training in the use of learning technologies and how to improve teaching through inquiry.
- Students were very positive overall and did not raise any major concerns.

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

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the inspection report. This 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 school inspection will report on changes 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