

INSPECTION REPORT

German International School Dubai

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

P.O. Box 500008, UAE, Tel: +971-4-3640000, Fax: +971-4-3640001, info@khda.gov.ae, www.khda.gov.ae

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT German International School Dubai

Location	Al Quoz
Type of school	Private
Website	www.germanschool.ae
Telephone	04-3386006
Address	PO Box 47072, Dubai
Principal	Thomas Dietrich
Curriculum	German
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-19 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	506
Number of Emirati students	1
Date of the inspection	30th January to 1st February 2012

Contents

The context of the school.....	3
Overall school performance 2011-2012.....	3
How has the school progressed since the last inspection?.....	3
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	8
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	9
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	10
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	11
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	13
What happens next?.....	14
How to contact us	14
Our work with schools.....	15

The context of the school

Located in Al Quoz, German International School is a private school providing education for 506 students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, aged between three and 19 years. The school follows a German curriculum aligned to the state of Thuringen. Students opt for one of two 'streams' in Grade 9, either Realschule or Gymnasia dependent on their career or higher education aspirations. The Gymnasia route leads to students taking the Arbitur examination.

There were 53 teachers and Kindergarten staff, including the Principal, Assistant Principal and heads of phases. There was a strong commitment in the school to the development of multi-lingual global citizens. All staff were well-qualified and conversant with the German curriculum and were deployed effectively to support learning. The curriculum was delivered mainly through the medium of German with certain subjects taught through English in secondary grades. The kindergarten team had high levels of expertise in German early childhood education. A dedicated and efficient administrative team supported the smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis.

The nationalities of the students were mixed but almost all had one parent who was German. The students had a range of first languages and there was a significant variation in language proficiency levels in English, German and Arabic. There were 79 Muslim students in the school of which 36 were Arabs.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The German International School provided a good quality of education following notable improvements since the last inspection. Key features of the school included an inclusive ethos and positive relationships, with a focus on team work amongst students and staff. There was a well-developed language programme that enabled students to achieve good levels of proficiency in first and additional languages. The Principal provided decisive leadership supported by highly effective governance. A review of middle managers had led to effective teams being developed throughout the school. The inclusion of all members of the school community in evaluating the school had resulted in a clearer view of strengths and areas for improvement. However, this did not always ensure that teachers and leaders had an accurate view of standards compared to other international schools.

The school had been responsive to the recommendations from the previous inspection and had made improvements, especially in enriching the curriculum and extending the range of teaching strategies. This was particularly apparent in all subjects but especially in Islamic Education, Arabic and mathematics. This had also resulted in a significant improvement in student engagement and improved attainment and progress. Some improvements in science had led to better progress in the secondary phase but greater development of students' conceptual understanding and investigation skills was still needed in this subject. There was also greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Whilst there was a comprehensive professional development programme, teachers and leaders still needed to ensure a sharper focus on analysing all available assessment information and using this to ensure that teaching and the curriculum met the needs of all learners including those with learning difficulties.

Key strengths

- Multi-lingual learners who were confident and proactive in their approaches to learning;
- A creative and child-centred ethos in Kindergarten which ensured young children were confident, curious and adventurous in their learning;
- Improvements in teaching, learning, attainment and progress in key subjects;
- A strong team approach to leadership which included middle management and students in evaluating the school well;
- Excellent strategic governance which had significantly impacted on school improvement.

Recommendations

- Continue to improve attainment and progress in Islamic Education, Arabic and science;
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that there are more high quality lessons in all subjects and phases;
- Ensure that students with special educational needs are well supported in lessons and, through well-managed systems, make good progress;
- Ensure that teachers and leaders at all levels analyse attainment information effectively to support teaching, identify trends and target improvement initiatives.

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

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

Students' attainment was good across most key subjects but was acceptable in Arabic as additional language learners in elementary and secondary phases and Islamic Education and science in the secondary grades. This was mainly because the improved teaching quality had not yet had time to impact on attainment levels of students. In Islamic Education, students demonstrated good understanding of Islamic values and applied these well to their lives but Qur'an recital skills required further development. In Arabic as a first language, elementary students attained well in all aspects of language apart from writing which was underdeveloped throughout the school. In German, the majority of students attained levels that are above curriculum standards; they used a high level of German to communicate with accuracy, orally and in writing. Students also attained good levels in all aspects of English with students in upper secondary grades showing excellent reading skills through their response to a wide range of challenging texts. Improvements in students' attainment in mathematics meant that this was now consistently good across all phases.

Students' progress was good in all key subjects apart from Islamic Education and Arabic for first language learners in secondary where it was acceptable. Most students made better than expected progress from their school entry points in their skills, knowledge and understanding. Most notable was the students' progress in the three languages of German, English and Arabic as an additional language. The competency test results over the last two years indicated good progress for elementary and secondary students in German which, given the diverse language starting points of students, was commendable. There had been improvements in the progress of secondary students in science and mathematics in both elementary and secondary phases. Students with special educational needs only made acceptable progress in key subjects mainly because their needs were not always well met in lessons.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good

Behaviour in lessons was good and students showed respect to each other and to their teachers. However, a few students in elementary lacked self-discipline when not directly supervised. Students had a strong work ethic, showing initiative and helping others. Most displayed very positive attitudes towards healthy living through food choices and exercise. Attendance and punctuality were good. Most students understood the importance of Islam in Dubai. They had a good understanding of Islam, the local culture and traditions. Students had a less well-developed understanding of Dubai's diversity. They actively contributed to the life of their school and wider community. The 'student speakers' ensured responsibilities were shared amongst all members of the student community. Students' understanding of how the UAE and Dubai had developed over the last forty years was good. Most students understood the reasons underpinning Dubai's economic success.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good

Most teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge. Kindergarten teachers showed the strongest understanding of how children learn, with an emphasis on the development of the personal, social and academic needs of children. Time was managed well in most lessons. Most teachers used ICT effectively to enhance teaching and learning. There were consistently good interactions between teachers and learners through dialogue and open questioning in most lessons. However, lesson planning did not always include clear objectives linked to expected learning outcomes for all learners. Nevertheless, this aspect was better in Kindergarten. In the good lessons, teachers set high expectations and challenging activities. However, in a few lessons teachers overly directed learning and talked too much, resulting in passive learners. There were good opportunities for enquiry, research and critical thinking in the best lessons, for example secondary science, but this was not a consistent feature across the school. Teaching strategies did not always meet the needs of all students.

Students across all phases had positive attitudes to learning. Most were active and engaged and showed responsibility for their own learning and a strong interest in each other's learning. From an early age, students were independent learners and collaborated well. They used ICT effectively to support their learning. They made good connections with real life and drew on personal experience particularly in Islamic Education in the elementary phase. Students linked learning across subjects and aspects well which improved their understanding. In Kindergarten, effective learning was developed through creativity, activity, curiosity and exploration. This was less apparent in lower and middle elementary grades. In a few lessons, learners did not always think critically or find things out for themselves.

Most teachers used questioning well and checked for understanding during lessons. They knew the strengths and weaknesses of their students. Peer and self-assessment was a feature of most lessons and was very strong in language lessons. A few teachers evaluated students' starting points well at the beginning of lessons, which ensured more focused teaching. In Kindergarten, on-going assessment ensured good tracking of children's skills and concept development over time. There was a lack of consistency in the quality of written feedback given to students but oral feedback was mostly helpful and ensured students knew how to improve. Assessment systems and processes were well established across the school. Leaders and teachers compared students' attainment in competency tests to that of students in German schools. However, assessment information was not analysed well to inform changes to the curriculum, teaching or learning. A stronger focus was needed upon identifying trends in attainment and progress of specific groups and individuals in order to plan more targeted improvements.

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

	KG	Elementary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good

The curriculum had a clear rationale, was broad and balanced and had been enriched by the addition of units in regional history, local geography and science. Teachers met regularly and planned for the successful transition of students through grade levels, although this needed to be further refined from Kindergarten to Grade 1. Regular reviews of the curriculum involved all teachers and had resulted in significant improvements. For example, the Islamic Education curriculum had been successfully developed to ensure greater student interest through real-life links. The curriculum in Kindergarten had also been developed well, to meet the needs of young learners. In Kindergarten, children enjoyed high levels of choice and a wide range of meaningful activities suitable for their age and stage of development. The language support programme ensured that students learning German and English as additional languages made good progress. However, greater support and challenge was still needed for those students who experienced difficulties and those who were attaining well. In most subjects, the curriculum provided several opportunities for independent learning and research, although a greater emphasis on the development of critical thinking skills together with increased challenge would further enhance student attainment and progress. There was a wide variety of extra-curricular activities which supported the personal, social, cultural and academic development of students.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good

The school was a safe and secure place to learn. Medical staff monitored students' health and well-being efficiently. Healthy living was promoted through the curriculum, displays and food choices. The premises were clean and bus transport was orderly and safe. Fire drills and emergency evacuation procedures were effective and well documented. All teachers knew their responsibilities for child protection. Students felt comfortable in approaching staff with any problems and appreciated the confidential support of the 'Trust Teacher'.

Students' personal well-being was a high priority and staff-student relationships were excellent in all sections of the school. Students received effective guidance and support, and older students were given appropriate advice on careers and higher education choices. There were good opportunities for older students to experience the world of work with local companies. The school was at an early stage of identifying students with special educational needs, including the most able. Staff were aware of students' particular needs but there was no clear strategy or policy to meet these in the classroom. Teachers and support staff did not always ensure that learning activities were sufficiently varied to challenge more able learners or support those who were finding learning difficult. The school's arrangements to track and monitor students' attendance and punctuality were effective and unexplained absences were reported immediately to parents.

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	Good
Governance	Outstanding
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

The senior leaders set a very clear vision and direction for the school and communicated this well to staff, parents and governors. A revised staffing structure had ensured leadership responsibilities were well defined and distributed effectively throughout the school. The Principal had created a strong team ethos which focused on improvement. There were several effective teams within and across subjects. The senior leadership team had developed cohesive and productive relationships and this led to effective communication amongst the staff and student team. A good example of shared leadership was seen with the student-led project to create the Arabic garden. The school had a strong capacity for further improvement with an even greater focus by leaders on student outcomes.

Self-evaluation processes had included all members of the school community and had resulted in a detailed document which was shared at all levels. However, this evaluation needed further refinement to ensure a more accurate picture of students' attainment and progress. Appraisal systems were well-established and linked directly to professional development. Nevertheless, monitoring of teaching and learning by leaders and through peer assessment, needed to be more rigorous and more closely linked to student outcomes. Effective planning had led to improvements in key areas but success criteria in improvement plans were not always measurable or focused enough on raising students' attainment levels.

The school had productive links with parents which strengthened students' learning and helped raise standards. An example of this was the parents involvement in extra-curricular activities. Parents were highly supportive of the school informally and more formally through the Parent Council. Communications between the school and parents were effective with regular written reports and conferences to ensure parents understood their children's progress and attainment. The school had good links with the wider community, including other similar schools and local businesses but links with other types of school were underdeveloped.

Governance in the school was outstanding. The governors demonstrated continued commitment and drive to improve the school for students. Excellent strategic guidance and strong support were provided to the school leaders. The Board was widely representative of the school community and context and included valuable expertise in a number of key areas. This expertise was used well to ensure excellent planning and careful evaluation of the impact of initiatives on the school. School leaders were held to account through regular meetings with focused agendas. Regular reviews and close monitoring at a strategic level supported this accountability process. Governors supported the school's direction, mission and values extremely well and had secured valuable funding to achieve some important developments. Governors provided invaluable support for the recruitment and selection of good teachers which had led to improved attainment and progress.

Management of the school was good. Routines were well established and communications were effective. All staff were familiar with procedures and knew their respective roles. Teachers were well qualified and deployed to good effect, especially support staff in Kindergarten. However, there was no dedicated support for children with special educational needs. The school provided a welcoming learning environment which was well suited to supporting the curriculum and after-school activities. The number of children based in some classrooms restricted movement and limited teaching strategies. Corridors were not used well to alleviate this problem. Specialist accommodation, for example in science, was of good quality. Learning resources were acceptable overall, but varied in quantity between subjects. The libraries were inadequately stocked.

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	191	60%
	Last year	100	50%
Teachers	42		85%
Students	40		95%

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

The majority of parents, most teachers and almost all senior secondary students responded to the survey. Most of the parents who responded were highly supportive of the school and very positive about their children's standards of attainment and rates of progress in key subjects. There was little disparity between parents', students' and teachers' comments; all groups believed leadership, teaching and students' behaviour were key strengths of the school. Parents and teachers were positive about the leadership in the school and recognised the improvements in teaching and learning in subjects such as Islamic Education, Arabic and science. Students and parents felt that their opinions were valued and suggestions were acted on by the school. Parents felt involved in their children's learning in a variety of ways and considered that school reports were timely and helpful. Most teachers and the majority of parents agreed that the last inspection had led to improvements in the school. Overall, almost all parents and teachers who responded and most students were satisfied with the quality of education provided.

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.

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

Copyright © 2012

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.