

# INSPECTION REPORT

## The Winchester School

Report published in April 2014

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The Winchester School

Location	Jebel Ali
Type of school	Private
Website	<a href="http://www.thewinchesterschool.com">www.thewinchesterschool.com</a>
Telephone	04 8820444
Address	P O Box 38058
Principal	Ranju Anand
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / FS1-Y13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	3612
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	64 (less than 2%)
Date of the inspection	2nd to 6th March 2014

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## The context of the school

The Winchester School is located in Jebel Ali. The school had 3,612 boys and girls on the roll, aged between three and 18 years. Students were enrolled in the Foundation Stage, primary (Years 1 to 6), secondary (Year 7 to 11) and post-16 (Years 12 to 13) phases. There were students from 86 different nations including India, Pakistan, Arab countries, Asian countries and The Philippines. Almost two per cent of the students were Emiratis. Approximately 20% of the students studied Arabic as a first language. About 2 percent of students had been identified as having a special educational need (SEN). At the time of the inspection, there were 202 teachers and 82 teaching assistants in the school. All were well qualified and suitably experienced. Children in the Foundation Stage followed the Early Years Foundation Stage guidelines of England. The school's curriculum for older students was based on the National Curriculum for England and Wales, and was adapted to reflect the UAE's local culture and traditions. Students were entered for external Cambridge, UK IGCSE and A-Level examinations in the upper school phases. The school had recently introduced Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) vocational courses for post-16 students.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

### Key strengths

- The fully inclusive ethos where students from a wide range of backgrounds have very positive attitudes and develop an outstanding understanding of Islamic values and wider world cultures.
- The wide range of enrichment opportunities, particularly in the Foundation Stage and post-16 phases, that support students' academic progress and personal development.
- The outstanding arrangements to ensure health and safety, and the high quality support and guidance for students in Years 12 and 13.
- The excellent relationships with parents and the beneficial links with the local and wider communities.
- Strong and determined leadership towards ensuring all students do as well as they can.

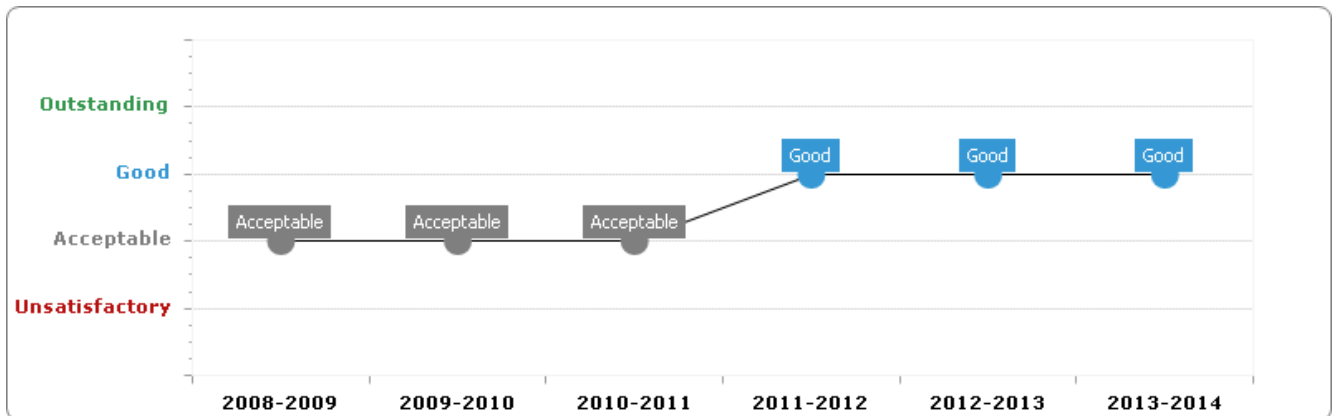
### Recommendations

- Raise the attainment of students in the secondary and post-16 phases in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language
- Improve teachers' confidence in challenging students to deepen their thinking and increase their capacity to work independently.
- Improve self-evaluation by refining the use of assessment data to gain a more accurate picture of students' attainment and progress across each phase.

## Progress since the last inspection

School leaders and staff had worked hard to improve students' progress and raise their attainment in the key subjects. Progress in Islamic Education had improved from acceptable to good. Standards had risen from acceptable to good in both the primary and secondary phases. Standards had risen to good in mathematics across all phases, and in science in the secondary and post-16 phases. Teachers' had a better understanding of how students learn. However, their confidence in offering an appropriate level of challenge to students, particularly the most able, remained inconsistent. The analysis and use assessment data had improved, although the use of assessment as a tool for setting targets and measuring students' progress towards them was not fully developed.

## Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Good	Good	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	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
Parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Both attainment and progress were consistently good across Foundation Stage and Primary. Attainment and progress were also good in secondary and post-16 in English, mathematics, science and Arabic as an additional language. Primary students studying Islamic Education knew the prescribed Surahs from Holy Qur'an well and also a number of supplications for various purposes. In the higher phases, students had sound knowledge of Islamic teachings but their Qur'an recitation skills and the use of evidence to support their opinions were not well developed. Attainment in Islamic Education in secondary and post 16 was acceptable. Most primary students studying Arabic as a first language read texts aloud fluently and expressively, and expressed simple ideas well in writing. In the upper grades, attainment was acceptable. Students' reading was acceptable but their independent writing skills were weaker. Their understanding of literature and application of grammar was adequate. Students studying Arabic as an additional language understood an appropriate range of phrases and expressions from spoken Arabic. They developed a good range of vocabulary and used it to express their ideas confidently. Attainment in English, mathematics and science was good across all phases. In Year 6, students were able to read and discuss whether or not statements in newspaper articles were biased or balanced. Year 11 students could identify the positive and negative aspects of newspapers and the media in general. Year 13 students showed significant depth and understanding of a novel's characters, plot and meanings. Students had a good understanding of number. Year 6 students could interpret data well. They were able to analyse information related to a study of supermarkets and associated healthy eating options. Year 11 students used their understanding of ratio and proportion to make comparisons with everyday objects. Senior students competently used their knowledge of algebra to interpret and solve complex questions related to the calculus. Students had a good understanding of the enquiry-based nature of science. In Year 1 they could relate the properties of materials to their use. In higher grades they could carry out complex guided practical work. Students predicted outcomes and explained how to make tests fair but their skills of planning entire investigations were underdeveloped. They achieved good results at IGCSE and A-level

Primary and secondary students made good progress in understanding Islamic teachings and values and in memorising new Surahs from Holy Qur'an. In higher phases, they made good gains in discussing Islam's morals and economic principles, especially in the secondary phase. Primary phase students learning Arabic as a first language progressed well in speaking, reading and basic writing skills. At secondary level, although students' comprehension skills grew soundly, their progress in independent writing was slow. Students learning Arabic as an additional language made good progress in all aspects of the subject, although progress in listening and reading was more rapid than in speaking and writing. Students across the school made good progress in English, mathematics and science. A significant majority of students entered the school with

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variable levels of English. Good progress in speaking and listening skills throughout the school gave students the confidence to express their opinions when making public presentations. Students' developing knowledge of correct sentence structures and their enjoyment of reading increased their ability to produce imaginative writing. Students developed their numeracy skills well as they progressed through the school. They became increasingly confident in applying the skills in unfamiliar situations. Students had an increasing awareness of geometrical relationships and pattern, recognising where these occur in everyday situations. In Year 5 and beyond, students were able to identify the different parts of a problem. Senior students enhanced their algebraic skills through applications in science. Students' use of scientific vocabulary developed quickly so that Grade 2 students, for example when constructing simple electrical circuits, could explain the transfer of energy. As students moved up the school they became increasing skilled at explaining phenomena using accurate scientific terminology. In upper secondary and post-16, students responded to the challenge of analysing data and applying knowledge in unfamiliar situations.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning skills was good in all phases. Children in the Foundation Stage responded well to opportunities to engage in activities. Older students were able to take responsibility for their learning, for example when they self-assessed their own knowledge and understanding. Most could collaborate well and communicated through effective presentations. When given opportunities, students related their understanding to aspects of their lives, for example when a secondary history class compared life at the time of the English Civil War with modern life in Dubai. Students' skills in using ICT to research, investigate, and organise their learning were broadening, and there was evidence of some outstanding practice. The use of ICT was increasingly being adapted for children at the Foundation Stage. Critical thinking skills were, in general, less well developed than other skills across the school. Teachers did not always give children and students enough freedom to plan their own investigations, and this over-structuring affected their acquisition of enquiry skills.

[View judgements](#)

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

The students' personal and social development was outstanding in almost all phases. In Primary and Secondary students personal responsibility was judged to be good. Students had excellent attitudes, particularly in the Foundation Stage, and Years 12 and 13. They expressed their views with confidence and listened well to others. Class prefects and the student council promoted a positive sense of belonging to the school and made students' voices heard clearly. Students behaved courteously towards each other and

managed relationships with staff confidently. Adoption of healthy lifestyles and good eating habits were prevalent across the phases. Attendance was good.

Students had an excellent understanding of Islamic values and their impact on Dubai. They initiated charity activities and many were very active in conducting assemblies to celebrate Arabic language and Islamic events. Students demonstrated an excellent appreciation of UAE's culture and were knowledgeable about Emirati leaders and history. Projects and displays reinforced their awareness of cultural diversity at school. Trips abroad and innovative newsletters reinforced senior students' awareness of global cultures and issues.

Students gained an excellent sense of community and environment responsibility. They were proactive and responsible members of the school community. They developed very good skills in entrepreneurship, and enthusiastically took the initiative in a wide range of environmental projects. Students across all phases took an appropriate level of control. For example, children in the Foundation Stage collected and counted the toys they had collected for those less fortunate than themselves. Primary and secondary students took the lead in recycling glass, paper and plastic from around the school and the local community. Older students spoke with passion about inequalities around the world and shared a determination to do as much they could to eradicate them.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was good at all stages. Teachers knew their subjects well. They had a good understanding of how students learn and of how to support them. They gave clear explanations and helpful demonstrations. Teachers at the Foundation Stage planned activities well, and facilitated children's learning through good use of resources. In other phases, teachers planned lessons in detail, and matched tasks and resources to the range of needs of different groups of students, although they did not always implement these plans effectively. Teachers used ICT well to support their teaching. Teachers' skills in questioning students were generally well developed. Dialogue was better in the secondary and post-16 phases than at the other phases, where questions did not always challenge students or develop their thinking and deepen their understanding. Nevertheless, teachers helped students by providing them with challenging and interesting home learning tasks.

Assessment was good at all phases of the school. Staff used effective systems for gathering and recording assessment data. Where appropriate, teachers measured students' progress and attainment effectively against National Curriculum levels and IGCSE and GCE examination standards. They used MoE standards in Islamic Education and in Arabic. In those subjects, assessment of knowledge and understanding was better than assessment of reasoning skills. Teachers in the Foundation Stage kept a good range of records of the

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progress of each child. Teachers knew their students' strengths and weaknesses. They gave helpful oral and written feedback on what students needed to do to improve their work. Students were increasingly benefiting from self- and peer-assessment activities. Teachers' use of assessment results to modify their lessons, and thereby support students more effectively, was developing, but was not yet fully consistent across the school.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum met the educational needs of all students to a good level except in post-16 where it was outstanding. The curriculum clearly reflected the schools' values with its focus upon the achievement, challenge and support for all students. An extensive range of subjects within the options promoted the personal interests of senior students. The development of vocational courses and adaptations to the mathematics curriculum reflected changing student aspirations. Transition procedures between classes were planned carefully so as to ensure continuity of learning between the respective stages. Senior students were well supported through a comprehensive careers guidance programme. The school successfully involved parents in enjoyable projects in a well-designed 'Science Week'. Projects of this type provided a meaningful context for cross-curricular links which were extended further through planned units in schemes of work. A diverse range of after-school activities and field trips added effectively to students' learning. The personal development opportunities provided for post-16 students were outstanding.

The design of the curriculum was outstanding in Post-16 and good in other phases. It provided stimulating and appropriately challenging opportunities for all groups of students. Personalised learning in small groups was a strong feature of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Modifications to the curriculum were effective in ensuring that students with special educational needs made at least good progress but they were not as successful in ensuring the most able students were consistently challenged. Programmes in the secondary and post-16 phases provided ample options and prepared students well for further education. These included work experience, careers guidance and BTEC courses. An extensive range of websites, specifically created for students learning English, was particularly successful in supporting those preparing for post-16 examinations.

[View judgements](#)

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

Provision for health and safety was outstanding across the school. All arrangements were effectively managed and comprehensively recorded. The arrival and departure of students was well supervised with access for buses and cars kept completely separate. All buses had a female conductor, a camera and a very effective system for scanning children on and off with automatic text notification to parents. Evacuation drills monitored by the Civil Defence were held regularly. Buildings were cleared efficiently. There was a well-established and rigorous risk assessment for all activities and school trips. Security, maintenance and cleanliness of premises was outstanding and students were very well supervised. Lifts ensured accessibility in the secondary block. Medical staff ran an excellent clinic, with secure storage of records and medicines. They proactively promoted healthy living and supervised the menus available from the canteen. All staff were trained in and aware of the procedures required by the school's child protection policy.

The quality of support was good from KG to Secondary. It was outstanding in Post-16. Emotional well-being was a key focus across the school community. Through innovative projects such as the 'aspirations and dreams' event all students had the opportunity to aspire to challenging future careers and develop optimism for the future. Adults, including support staff, were aware of the need for positive levels of interaction with all students. Behaviour management strategies were usually effective. Students with a range of special educational needs were welcomed and accommodated in all phases of the school. There were well-established processes and procedures for the identification of children with additional needs and the provision of additional support. Highly valued and appropriate course and career advice was given at points of transition. Sophisticated electronic systems, including a text messaging service, kept administrators, teachers and parents informed of students' attendance levels and punctuality.

[View judgements](#)

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

Leadership was good. Insightful and inspirational leadership, and a relentless drive for improvement were powerful factors in the progress made since the previous inspection. The principal ensured a sense of purpose, a shared vision and a clear understanding of the strategic direction. She was held in high regard by students, parents and staff. At all levels, strong and determined leadership team had successfully sustained the schools strengths and had led to further improvements since the last inspection. This indicated a good capacity for continuous improvement.

Self-evaluation was good. Improvement plans were strongly focused on emerging priorities. The monitoring of teaching and learning, through lesson observations and the scrutiny of students' work, was very effective and provided a secure basis for the comprehensive teacher training programme. Assessment data were analysed to identify trends in attainment. However, the use of assessment information to set targets for individuals and cohorts, to evaluate progress and to make predictions was inconsistent. This constrained the self-review and strategic planning.

Partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding. Excellent efforts were made to engage with parents and to elicit their support. Parents made very positive comments about the welcome they received from all staff. A strong and active parents' representative group contributed to their feeling of belonging and sense of community. Parents received frequent up-dates on how their children were progressing through efficient communication systems that included the school's internet portal, instant messaging and emails. Numerous links with local schools, businesses and charities had been established and these added to the effective enrichment programme. Members of the local community were very supportive. For example, a senior police officer spoke to students about the misuse of drugs.

Governance of the school was good. The board of governors closely monitored the school's performance and held senior leaders to account. Regular surveys ensured that governors were aware of parents' views. Moreover, an innovative 'extended development group' including staff, parents and students provided an additional conduit for parents' views. Governors, through the chief education officer, obtained specific advice and guidance for school leaders and staff, making a good contribution to school improvement. Although plans were in hand to reduce class sizes in the Foundation Stage, the school did not meet requirements in this respect.

Management, facilities and resources were good. Excellent administrative procedures resulted in the smooth running of the school. Staff were suitably qualified and their skills and expertise were used to good effect. Leadership responsibilities were distributed effectively, as evident in range of expertise and experience in the senior leadership team. Individual strengths were fully utilised. For example, the expertise and commitment of the professional development coordinator had led to many successful curriculum innovations, particularly in the sixth form. The premises provided students and staff with a pleasant working environment. The libraries were well stocked and used effectively. Support staff were generally deployed well, although the ability of some assistants in Arabic and Islamic Education lessons was constrained by their lack of Arabic.

[View judgements](#)

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

Emirati students were welcomed in the school and played a full part in all activities. The progress of Emirati students was tracked well and the school's analysis of data indicated that they generally progressed at similar rates to their peers. Emirati students with special educational needs benefited from the same effective support provided for all students and, as a result, they made good progress from their starting points. A few Emirati students were among the highest attaining groups and there were ample opportunities for those with particular gifts and talents to develop them further.

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

The school provided support through its Achievement Centre (ACe). A highly effective partnership between the centre leader and senior management had resulted in high quality provision across the school. Continuous staff training and successful strategies to retain experienced staff had developed the school's capacity to support a range of special educational needs.

Members of the ACe team contributed to the planning and teaching of individual students. All teachers were expected to address the individual needs of their students. Adaptations to the curriculum were effective, including the introduction of BTEC vocational courses. Opportunities within the school to develop work skills had broadened the options available for all groups of students, including those with particular gifts and talents. Arrangements for students with KHDA-authorized language exemption were efficiently organised and effective use was made of the additional curriculum time available in the school day.

Parental engagement in the initial identification, on-going support and transition arrangements were a key feature of the procedures. Feedback from parents of children with special needs reflected a high level of satisfaction with the way the school accommodated and provided for the individual needs of their children.

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

Teachers of Arabic as a first language had secure subject knowledge but the quality of teaching and its effectiveness was variable across the phases. Teaching in the lower grades was generally more enthusiastic and succeeded in engaging most students. Across the school, teachers used correct standard Arabic to communicate with their students. They used a variety of resources including ICT. The quality of questioning was better in the primary phase, as a result of which the levels of engagement were significantly better in the lower grades. In the upper grades, teachers were not always successful in providing appropriate levels



of challenge to promote thinking. Where teachers provided opportunities for students to work independently, learning was enhanced. Low expectations in writing for older students limited students' progress in this aspect.

The school curriculum was based on the Ministry of Education standards for Arabic and met the teaching requirements. The Arabic curriculum was mostly limited to the prescribed textbooks with a few enrichment activities. A section for Arabic reading resources had been established in the school library but the impact of this initiative was still limited.

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

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	373	15%
	Last year	536	23%
Teachers	85		41%
Students	251		83%

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

Only a small percentage of parents responded to the survey. Those that did were generally happy with all aspects of the school. They felt that they received detailed information about how well their children were doing. About a fifth of parents had concerns about homework, but there was no agreement about whether there was too much or too little. Nearly half of the respondents believed that there were inconsistencies in the teaching of Arabic. The survey of teachers, to which a minority responded, revealed that teachers enjoyed working at the school. They were extremely positive about the school leadership. Teachers felt valued and supported. They were particularly pleased with the opportunities the school provided for professional development. Most students responded to their survey, the majority of whom expressed positive views. However, about a fifth raised concerns about the management of behaviour and the range of subjects and activities on offer.

## 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)

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