

INSPECTION REPORT

Raffles International School - South

Report published in April 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Raffles International School - South

Location	Umm Suqeim
Type of school	Private
Website	www.rafflesis.com
Telephone	04 4271223
Address	P O Box 122900, Dubai
Principal	David Impey
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	4-13/Kindergarten 1 to Grade 7
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1489
Largest nationality group of students	Arab
Number of Emirati students	126 (8%)
Date of the inspection	24th to 27th November 2013

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The context of the school

Raffles International School, South Campus, is located in Umm Suqeim. At the time of the inspection, the school roll had increased by around one third compared to the previous year, and was 1,489 boys and girls, aged between four and 13 years. The student population included over 80 different nationalities including Arabs, Asians and Europeans. Approximately 20 per cent of the students studied Arabic as a first language and around eight per cent of the students were Emiratis. Two per cent of the students had some form of special educational need (SEN).

The curriculum was broadly based on the English National Curriculum, with a Kindergarten curriculum based on the Montessori approach.

At the time of the inspection, there were 101 teachers and 69 teaching assistants in the school. All were well qualified. Four new heads of secondary subjects and a whole-school head of SEN had been appointed at the start of the session. The principal had just completed his first full year in post, having started in September 2012.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- Implementation of the curriculum in Kindergarten, leading to outstanding progress in English, outstanding progress and attainment in mathematics, and very positive learning and social skills for the children;
- Students' responsible attitudes to learning, and their respectful and considerate relationships with adults and fellow students from a wide range of national backgrounds;
- Successful promotion of healthy lifestyles and provision of a safe environment;
- The commitment of staff to being inclusive and catering for the needs of individual students;
- The high quality buildings, facilities and resources, which enhanced students' experiences.

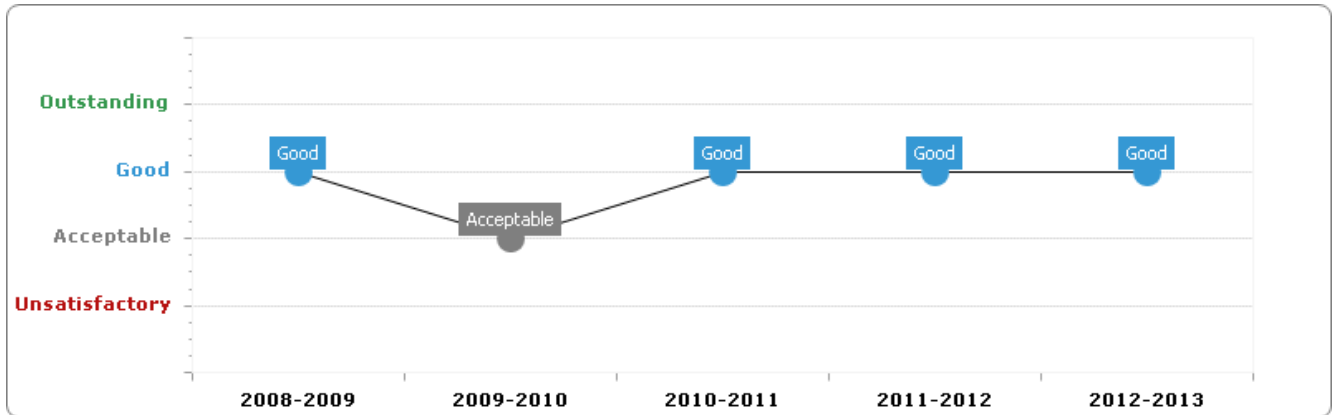
Recommendations

- With the aim of improving progress and attainment in Arabic, align the Arabic curriculum to the required standards, and employ a wider and more effective range of teaching approaches, including the development of critical thinking skills.
- Increase the opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning, particularly through enquiry, research and use of technology.
- Review the processes of curriculum planning, lesson planning and assessment of students' progress, to clarify for staff what is required and to provide a stronger focus on student learning.

Progress since the last inspection

- Staff had improved their use of assessment information.
- Staff were making good progress in improving the support for students with special educational needs by providing tasks that matched their individual education plans.
- The school was getting better at utilising parental and community expertise to enrich the curriculum.
- Very little progress had been made in Islamic Education and Arabic. The school had not been successful in raising students' attainment in these subjects. Attainment in Islamic Education and in Arabic as a first language at the primary stage was now lower than previously. Progress in Arabic as a first language had declined too at the primary and secondary stages. Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language remained unsatisfactory.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Quality of students' learning skills	Outstanding	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was acceptable in Islamic Education, and in Arabic as a first language at the secondary stage. It was unsatisfactory in Arabic as an additional language, and in Arabic as a first language at the primary stage. It was good elsewhere, and outstanding in mathematics in Kindergarten. Most students had appropriate knowledge of Islam. They could understand the difference between the compulsory and optional prayers. In Arabic as a first language, listening skills were the strongest although most students relied too heavily on local dialects rather than on standard Arabic in their speech. Most students in Secondary could read familiar topics with accuracy, but reading was weaker in Primary. Writing skills were underdeveloped across all stages. In Arabic as an additional language, listening skills were secure. However, only a minority of students could use basic Arabic phrases to communicate. Writing skills in primary and reading and writing skills in secondary were well below the expected levels. In English, children in Kindergarten were able to match letters to sounds. In the primary stage, students listened well and talked with confidence. Students in the secondary stage were skilled in writing in a range of genres. In mathematics, children in Kindergarten were able to count accurately to ten and knew the names of the numbers beyond ten. A significant minority of the children were accurate in counting to twenty. Primary students could organise and display data, organising it in different ways. Secondary students were able to identify and generate sequences and had a good understanding of rotational symmetry. In science, Kindergarten children were articulate in their observations of the world around them. Students in Primary could research habitats and those in secondary had a good understanding of matter.

Progress followed a broadly similar pattern to that in attainment. Progress in recitation and memorisation of the Holy Qur'an was slower than in other aspects of Islamic Education. In Arabic as a first language, most secondary students, but only a minority of primary students, were developing vocabulary at a reasonable rate. In Arabic as an additional language, few students were developing skills at an appropriate rate. Children in the Kindergarten made outstanding gains in speaking and listening as many entered the school with few English skills. Primary students steadily acquired fluency in speaking, and wrote with increasing accuracy. In the secondary years, students expressed their ideas and opinions in increasing depth in speaking and writing. A majority of children in the Kindergarten exceeded the expected outcomes for their age in counting and in solving simple mathematical problems. Primary and secondary students showed good progress and developed their mathematical understanding well over time. In science, Kindergarten children were developing their observational and language skills. Students in Primary progressed from being able to do simple experiments about matter in early Primary to challenging research by the end of the phase. In Secondary, students made progress in designing their own experiments.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were outstanding in Kindergarten and good in the other phases. Children in Kindergarten were successfully encouraged to explore the world around them. Most students were able to learn independently and collaborate sensibly. They responded well to enquiry-based activities and when challenged to think critically. In the best lessons, students were involved and engaged in their own learning and able to take responsibility for it. Their use of information and communication technology (ICT) varied from class to class, but when ICT was available, students made good use of it to promote their learning. Students were able to link new facts and understanding to prior learning and to the real world in English, mathematics and science. Students developed good critical thinking skills when they were challenged.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The quality of students' personal responsibility was outstanding. The other aspects of their personal and social development were good. Children in Kindergarten showed responsible attitudes. In all phases, students behaved very well and applied themselves to work well, particularly when their learning tasks motivated them. Relationships between adults and students were respectful and considerate. Students of a wide range of nationalities mingled together in a friendly way. Students responded well to the school's promotion of healthy lifestyles, for example through advice on diet and opportunities to engage in sport and exercise. Attendance was acceptable but variable. It was low in the secondary phase. Children and students respected the values of Islam and could identify how they influenced life in Dubai. Children in Kindergarten could speak of local traditions and the cultural heritage of the UAE. For example, they knew the name of the ruler of Dubai and key landmarks. While students were aware of some of the celebrations in the UAE and those of their own culture, their knowledge of others' cultures was less well developed. Their good understanding of local aspects did not extend to the economy of Dubai. Children and students took responsibility for maintaining their work environment and identified with the school as a community. Most could relate to aspects of the wider community. Almost all were aware of the plight of others and actively participated in charitable acts. Students knew that environmental concerns needed to be taken seriously. Most students understood that a good work ethic was important and took pride in what they did. Students had a strong voice through school councils, which gave them opportunities to influence developments in the school.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was good and some outstanding lessons were observed. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects was a positive feature. Understanding of how Kindergarten children learned best was a strength. Teachers planned their lessons carefully and had high expectations for their students. Interactions between teachers and students were positive, productive and respectful at all times. Teachers' use of questions to promote dialogue and encourage students to be inquisitive was good. Most teachers employed a range of teaching strategies to meet the needs of individuals and groups of students. Teachers' use of resources in lessons was effective. Teachers of Arabic did not sufficiently challenge their students or promote critical thinking. Teaching observed in non-key subjects including French, Mandarin, physical education, ICT, music and art, was also good and, at times, outstanding.

Assessment across the school was good. It was particularly effective in the Kindergarten. Teachers had a well-developed knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses. Most teachers made ongoing, formative assessments of students' progress and modified their teaching strategies accordingly in lessons. The school compiled copious amounts of assessment information, but the analysis of the data was not always carried out effectively to inform student learning or to review the curriculum. Some staff did not fully understand the recently introduced 'learning ladders', which set out the desired progression in subjects at various grades. While some students were helped to self-assess and set learning targets for themselves, this was not done consistently across all subjects or stages. The quality of oral and written comments to students was high.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum and its design to meet the learning needs of different groups were good in all three phases. It was coherent and comprehensive within grade levels and progressively across grade levels within subject areas. Transition from Kindergarten to Primary was seamless. Transition from Primary to Secondary was facilitated through meetings of teachers from the relevant grades. The school's curriculum documents were stored on an easily accessed network, allowing all teachers to take part in ongoing review and supporting the development of cross-curricular links. Teachers were increasingly using established analyses of thinking and learning, such as Bloom's Taxonomy, to promote critical thinking. A wide range of activities such as field trips and national or international days enriched the curriculum. The range of extra-curricular activities offered was comprehensive. Kindergarten students, in their Montessori programmes, were expected to pursue their own learning interests, and the school's intention was to foster this principle throughout the school. In the primary and secondary phases, a broad, comprehensive

curriculum helped to meet students' needs. Teachers were working to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all groups in their classes. Students with SEN and those with English as an additional language had good support through individualised educational programmes, personal learning plans or support classes. Opportunities for students to study subjects that fulfilled their talents, interests and aspirations included French mother-tongue classes and a wide range of competitions, events and extra-curricular activities.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's provision for health and safety was of outstanding quality. The school had in place effective arrangements to keep students safe at all times throughout the school. The school's premises, equipment and resources were checked regularly for quality, and appropriate maintenance was provided when needed. The emergency evacuation drills were done regularly and the transport arrangements were of excellent quality. The clinic stored medicines securely, kept health-related records on every student and provided students with excellent medical service. Healthy living was widely and consistently promoted at school. The canteen provided students with healthy food, and the physical education department organised healthy eating competitions and involved students in regular exercise. A clear and detailed child protection policy was in place and all students, staff and teachers were aware of it.

The quality of support was good across the school. Staff-student relationships were very positive, and a sense of mutual respect and trust existed within the classrooms and outside in the playground. Monitoring of students' well-being and personal development was managed with commitment by the counsellor and the learning support staff. Systems to monitor students' attendance and punctuality were securely in place. Most students arrived promptly to classes, ready to work. Teachers provided information to students on their progress. Guidance was provided to students when necessary.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Most key aspects of leadership and management were good. Senior leaders ensured that the school's vision and mission were clear to all. They had been successful in maintaining the school's good overall performance. New subject leaders in English, mathematics, science and humanities had been appointed in the secondary phase, and for whole-school SEN. Relationships and communication among staff and between senior leaders and staff were positive. Staff were involved in a range of group meetings which were helping them to implement changes but some of them were not clear about how assessment should be used.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was good. Staff used a wide range of processes to gather information and data on the quality of the school's work. The school had a policy on performance appraisal and there was a requirement for at least one lesson observation for each teacher, but no such observations had been carried out at the time of the inspection. Teachers were seen though by senior staff who carried out 'learning walks' which involved short visits to a number of classrooms. The results of these visits were recorded well. Overall, senior staff awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses was good. The data which was gathered was not always analysed nor acted upon fully. Staff were not always clear about the implementation of improvement projects.

Parents had a good range of opportunities to be involved in the school. The Advisory Council included parents, and there was a parent association which included groups of parent representatives. The school had recently set up a parent review group in response to parental wishes to know more about the development of the secondary phase of the school. The Advisory Council met groups of parents occasionally, and senior staff had carried out a very good survey of parental views. Parents were increasingly involved in school events and activities, including helping in classes and giving talks. The use of a school communicator technology application, and other aspects such as regular newsletters, were appreciated by parents. Reports to parents on their children's progress were helpful but did not include next steps in learning.

Governance was good. The school's governors supported the school through giving advice and exercising a degree of accountability. The Board of Directors, which included owner representatives, exercised accountability, particularly through senior officers who had responsibility for quality assurance. The officers worked closely with senior school leaders, and exhibited drive and determination to improve the school. The governors sought the views of stakeholders. Overall, governance had a good influence on the school's development.

The management of the school, including staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. The day-to-day life of the school was managed well, and staff were working to improve student attendance and punctuality. Staff were well qualified, although some in positions of responsibility were relatively inexperienced. Partly as a result of the 40 per cent rise in the school's roll since the previous session, a significant minority of staff had only been in the school since the start of the session. The premises, which were of high quality and maintained very well, included science laboratories, art rooms with a kiln, music rooms, a swimming pool, sports hall and field, and a well-stocked library. The school's stock of resources had been enhanced from previous year.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The school's data on students' internal test marks for academic year 2012-13 showed how well Emirati students attained across the performance bands in all subjects. The proportion of Emirati students who achieved the highest scores on tests, was lower than the proportions for other students. This was the case in all subjects at most year grades. The difference was least in Islamic Education. Attendance of Emirati students was, on average, lower than that of other students. Emirati students took part fully in class lessons and other activities along with their peers. The curriculum gave good attention to the UAE heritage and culture. Emiratis were represented on the Board of Directors and in the governors.

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

Students with special educational needs (SEN) made good progress across the school in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Progress in Islamic Education and Arabic was not as strong. Progress was best in classes where students had the support of assistants or learning support teachers who were clear about the learning outcomes and expected achievements. Most staff had developed an increased understanding of SEN students' needs. This was mainly due to more focused individual education plans. The school was beginning to recognise its gifted students. Identification of students with SEN had improved but was weaker in Kindergarten than in the other stages. Progress in key subjects was monitored on a regular basis through tests. This information was analysed and used in curriculum plans to ensure that detailed learning targets were set for students with SEN. The school had effective admissions and SEN policies. Students were assessed and accepted if the school could ensure provision for their emotional and academic needs. Students with SEN were fully included and took part in all aspects of the curriculum. Parents were involved at all stages and meetings were arranged regularly between teachers and parents

to discuss their child's progress. The school also offered advice and guidance to parents to ensure a consistent approach between home and school. Leaders provided expertise, and there were effective assessment systems in place. Staff had been offered training and felt better informed. However, teachers continued to need guidance as to how curriculum modifications could be made to address SEN.

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

The quality of teaching varied widely between classes although it was generally more effective in the secondary phase than in the primary phase. Most teachers used a direct, instructional approach, but spent too much time talking themselves rather than letting the students use the language. Consequently, many students had limited opportunities to demonstrate their learning or practise the language. Teacher-student interactions or dialogue were limited. Teachers' questions were usually seeking the recall of information. Lessons were slightly better in secondary, where teachers tried to engage students by using a relatively wider range of activities and resources. Expectations were usually low; only a few teachers attempted to match tasks appropriately to the needs of groups of students. Lessons provided limited opportunities for students to be independent learners.

Students' transition between Primary and Secondary was not managed well enough to ensure students were prepared for the next stage of learning. The curriculum provided to Arabic language support classes was weak and lacked the appropriate level of challenge for these students. The curriculum rarely took into account the students' prior learning and was not planned so that the gaps in their learning were filled. There were very few opportunities for students to practise all language skills, for example speaking or writing in simple, modern standard Arabic.

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	26%
	Last year	290	31%
Teachers	76		78%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

Around one quarter of parents responded to the report, a decrease in relation to the previous year's return. Three quarters of the teachers responded, almost double the previous year's figure. Most parents who responded were satisfied with the quality of education in the school. Almost all felt that their children enjoyed school and were safe and well looked after. Most had generally positive views about the curriculum and teaching. While parents were positive about their children's progress in English, mathematics and science, less than half felt the same about Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. Most parents, and a majority of teachers, thought that the school was led well. Only a majority of parents and teachers thought that leaders listened to their opinions. Less than half of the parents felt that they were aware of the school's performance on international assessments. A majority of staff felt that the school supported their professional development.

What happens next?

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

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

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

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

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