

# INSPECTION REPORT

## American School of Dubai

Report published in April 2013

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT American School of Dubai

Location	Al Barsha
Type of school	Private
Website	<a href="http://www.asdubai.org">www.asdubai.org</a>
Telephone	04-3950005
Address	PO Box 71188, Dubai
Principal	Dr. Brent Mutsch
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	4-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1,663
Largest nationality group of Students	United States and Canada
Number of Emirati students	4 (less than 1%)
Date of the inspection	28th January to 31st January 2013

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## The context of the school

The American School of Dubai is located in Al Barsha and was opened by Dubai Petroleum Company in 1966. The modern and technologically advanced campus was extensive and comprised of three building housing the elementary, middle and high school, in addition to specialist areas. The school enrolled 1,665 students at the time of inspection, representing a total of 63 nationalities. Seventy-two percent of the students were from the United States and Canada. The school was at capacity and had a large number of students on the waiting list. Emirati students comprised less than one percent of the student population.

The school offered a US curriculum and student progress was judged utilizing numerous assessments, including but not limited to the SATs, PSATs, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), The American College Tests (ACT) and the Writing Assessment Program (WrAP). Most students scored well above national and international standards.

The school was grouped in a standard American configuration with Kindergarten 1 and 2, the elementary school housing Grades 1 to 5, the middle school included Grades 6 to 8 and the high school served students in Grades 9 through 12. Each school was served by student counselors, a Principal and at least one Associate Principal. All teachers were well qualified and most were experienced in teaching a US curriculum.

## Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

### Key strengths

- Consistently outstanding attainment and progress in English at all levels;
- The exemplary learning ethos of students across the school;
- High quality teaching , learning and assessment in Kindergarten and elementary phases;
- The outstanding arrangements for health, safety and support for all students;
- Outstanding parental engagement opportunities.

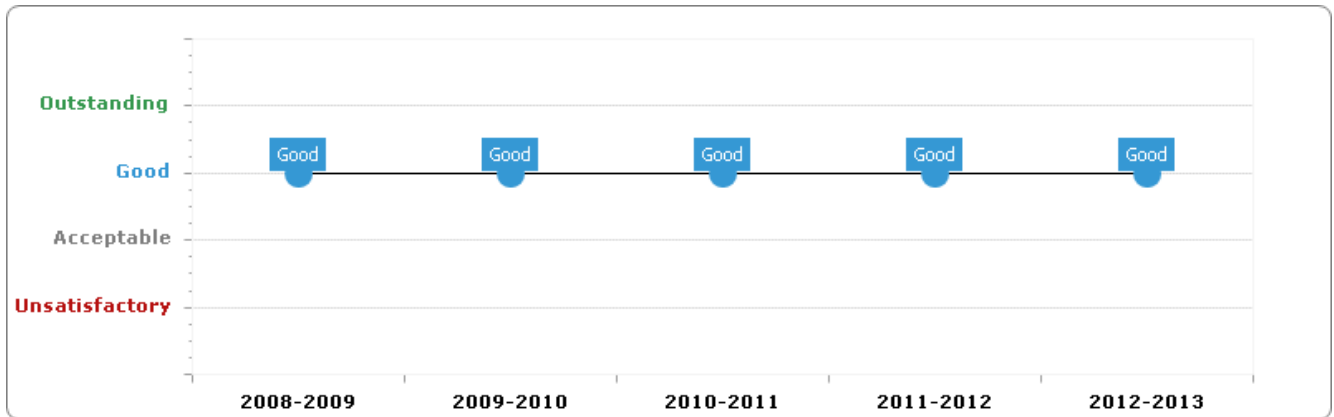
### Recommendations

- Leaders of the school should ensure compliance with Ministry of Education requirements for Islamic Education, for Muslim students, and Arabic instruction;
- Continue to promote consistency in teaching quality to bring examples of acceptable instruction up to the good and outstanding levels identified across most of the school.

## Progress since the last inspection

- The school had taken no steps to ensure compliance with Ministry of Education regulations regarding the teaching of Islamic Education for Muslim students, as stated in the previous inspection;
- Although limited steps had been taken, the school remained non-compliant with Ministry of Education requirements regarding the time allocated to Arabic as a first language and Arabic as an additional language.

## Trend of overall performance



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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Islamic Education</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
<b>English</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Progress</b>	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Mathematics</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Science</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Good
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)



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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

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

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

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

Students' attainment in Islamic Education was unsatisfactory because it was not included in the curriculum. Attainment in Arabic as a first language was also unsatisfactory as it was no longer a part of the curriculum. For most students in elementary and the minority in middle and high school who studied Arabic as an additional language, attainment was acceptable. Most students enrolled in Arabic as an additional language had an acceptable range of vocabulary and demonstrated appropriate skills in reading considering their time of study. Children's attainment in English was outstanding in the Kindergarten. Almost all had developed the four key language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing well above the expected level for their age. Attainment in the elementary phase, in English, was outstanding; students could read complex texts of differing genre and write their own stories following a similar style. In the middle and high schools, attainment was outstanding and students spoke and listened very well. Almost all were highly articulate and discussed and debated literature intelligently. Students read very effectively to obtain information and understood how styles and themes in literature are developed. Attainment was good in mathematics in the Kindergarten and elementary grades, and outstanding in the middle and high school. Middle and high school students were able to use different calculation strategies to find a solution, and could explain to their peers how their strategies could be applied. In science, students were particularly effective in the application of their skills to real life situations. Investigative skills were a strength, as were the students' secure knowledge and understanding of basic scientific concepts and knowledge.

Progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language was unsatisfactory across the school because they were not included within the planned curriculum. Arabic as an additional language was acceptable overall in the elementary School. In the middle and the high schools a majority of students did not study the subject and their progress was unsatisfactory. Progress in English in the Kindergarten and elementary grades was outstanding in lessons and over time. All students were building comprehensive portfolios of work and demonstrated oral skills that were above expectations for their ages. All middle and high school students built very systematically on their previous knowledge and understanding. Particular strengths included the progress students made in their speaking skills and in writing in a wide range of different styles. Progress was good in mathematics in the Kindergarten and elementary phases, and outstanding in the middle and high school. The majority of students made better than expected progress as measured against their learning objectives. In science, the majority of students made significant gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding, as measured against the learning objectives in the lesson. Students also made links between subject areas and were able to apply their skills successfully. On-line learning was utilized extensively.

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

The attitudes and behavior of students was outstanding in all phases of the school. Students were friendly, confident and well behaved toward each other and adults. They readily asked and answered questions and helped each other. In lessons, students worked cooperatively and respectfully. Students across the phases could explain a healthy life style with clarity and accuracy. Students made healthy food selections and most reported participation in regular exercise. Attendance was good. Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local culture and global awareness was good across the school. They appreciated the relevance and impact of these values on everyday life in Dubai. Students also demonstrated good understanding of a wide range of cultures from around the world. Students were active and responsible members of the school community. They carried out work independently and were comfortable making decisions. They had an excellent work ethic and often chose the more challenging option for homework. At all levels, students demonstrated their desire to complete tasks well. Students were actively engaged in seeking ways to improve the environment, participated in recycling and conservation efforts, and had a school garden where produce was grown and sold.

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

The quality of teaching was outstanding in the Kindergarten and elementary phases and good in the middle and high schools. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects and how they are learned by young children was an overall strength. The effectiveness of lesson planning was generally very high. Plans were detailed, based upon assessment information and allowed for appropriate levels of challenge. Teachers' plans were regularly updated to better meet the learning needs of students. The management of time by teachers was skillful in almost all lessons; this was stronger in the Kindergarten and elementary classes. Teachers' use of resources in lessons was highly effective, as they enabled students to use a variety of things to learn. Interactions between teachers and students were positive, productive and respectful at all times. Teachers' use of dialogue and questions was another overall strength; they promoted thinking by the ways that they spoke with and questioned their students. Teaching strategies were varied in order to meet the needs of all individuals and groups of students. Teaching promoted independent learning very well across the grades and subjects, but teachers of Arabic did not sufficiently challenge their students. Teaching was observed in non-key subjects, including history, physical education, information and communications technology, drama and was of good quality overall.

Students' learning was outstanding in the Kindergarten and elementary grades and good in the middle and high schools. Teachers were successful in achieving the school's mission to challenge and inspire students.

Almost all students were passionate learners, from the youngest to the oldest. Students' engagement in and responsibility for their own learning was common to all grades and almost all subjects. Almost all students took full responsibility for their learning and almost all were engaged throughout their lessons. Students' interactions and collaboration were exemplary in almost all lessons. They worked together to debate issues, solve problems, apply concepts, design experiments, create and perform simple dramas and help less able students. The application of learning to the real world was a common feature of learning across the school, evident in most key subjects. Students regularly made connections between different areas of learning. Students' enquiry, research and critical thinking skills were highly developed in most lessons and included frequent and skillful use of information technology. In some classes, students offered their teachers a critique of the lesson to help their teachers improve.

The assessment of learning was outstanding across all phases of the school. Assessment systems and processes were very precise. Comprehensive files and portfolios were available for the younger students. Assessment information was detailed and clearly linked to the US curriculum expectations. The tracking of students' progress was detailed in almost all subjects and allowed both students and teachers to identify learning targets for improvement. Importantly, curriculum modifications were made as a result of what was learned through the assessment process. Students frequently self-assessed and set learning targets for themselves, which they often revisited as part of their 'Falcon Dreams'. The quality and effectiveness of oral and written comments to students gave guidance for improvement on a range of skills and content areas.

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

The quality of the curriculum was outstanding in Kindergarten and good in elementary, middle and high school. The curriculum had a clear rationale based on core values. The school had adopted the common core standards from the United States and planned further subject adoptions when they became available. The curriculum had breadth and balance across all key subjects with the exception of Islamic Education and Arabic which did not meet the Ministry of Education requirements. The extensive range of after-school activities, clubs, field trips and sporting programs enhanced the curriculum. Kindergarten and elementary students studied art, music, information technology, Arabic as an additional language, guidance and physical education in addition to the key subjects. Elective courses in middle and high school provided student choice in areas of interest. Careful planning and curriculum review ensured a progression of skills and seamless transitions from one phase of schooling to the next. Teachers knew their students' strengths and weaknesses

and many lessons targeted individual levels of learning by differentiating the instruction. Information technology was skillfully used to plan and deliver the curriculum.

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

The school organization contracted with groups who, along with school leaders, were responsible for the development and implementation of very effective policies and procedures that assured safety for the school population. These contracts include areas relating to transport safety, security, routine fire drills, evacuation and lockdown procedures, and facility maintenance. Medical personnel, located in the school, provided medical services, educational programs, promoted healthy living and addressed concerns of students, staff, teachers, and parents. Staff, teachers and students were aware of the policies and procedures for child protection arrangements.

There were very positive relationships across the school and all staff and students worked co-operatively together to a common purpose. Arrangements to review attendance and punctuality were rigorously used on a very regular basis to identify concerns and to alert staff to address issues promptly and effectively. The school was very aware of individual students and their needs. It recorded and reviewed students' personal development and well-being thoroughly. The school had very well established arrangements to give students high quality advice for their personal and academic development. These included the provision of many excellent opportunities for older students to be made aware of the world of work and of career paths available to them. There were outstanding opportunities for these students to meet and discuss with many local people the routes they had taken to arrive at their present careers.

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

There were rigorous arrangements to identify quickly and accurately students with special education needs. The school classified these needs appropriately. Support staff was very well qualified and were very well focused on individual students. Parents were encouraged to play a full part in the process. They were kept well informed. All students with special educational needs played a full part in their classes and were included in all activities within and outside the school day. Overall, in most key subjects, their progress was good.

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

The leadership team had a clear vision for the school which was shared with all stakeholders. Leadership was a collaborative model with appropriate authority and accountability to perform the assigned responsibilities. Communications from the school leadership had been applauded by staff, parents and governors as consistent and informative with a clear focus on student achievement. The school leadership team demonstrated a clear ability to lead the school forward. Issues were addressed promptly.

Sound processes for school evaluation were well established and resulted in action plans that were achievable and measurable. Evaluation of the school's performance was well planned, including teaching and learning. The process and impact of school improvement planning was evident in several areas, but needed to be further addressed in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language and Arabic as an additional language. Progress with an audit and accompanying plan had been made. However, it had not been fully implemented to date. Not all recommendations from last year's report had been successfully addressed.

Relationships with parents were outstanding. Parents reported a high degree of satisfaction with the school and the new leaders. Reports of student progress was consistent and very well received by most parents. Links with the wider community were abundant and had a direct impact on the school program. Parent's groups were pleased by their inclusion by the Board of Governors, including representation on the Strategic Planning Committee. Parents were enthusiastic to support and be engaged in all aspects of the school and to develop and chair many of the major events that enriched the student's school experience.

The Board of Governors had extensive parent representation in its composition. The Board of Governors held school leaders accountable for the attainment of the school's overall vision and specific action plan goals. Governors were actively engaged in the planning and conduct of management related issues, working collaboratively with the school leadership. The Board of Directors needed to work with the school leadership to arrive at a resolution on compliance issues that faced the school regarding Islamic Education and Arabic instruction.

The day-to-day management of the school was outstanding and the facility was well maintained. The school staff were highly qualified and focused on the personal and academic welfare of all students. Additional staff had been hired to support student learning, especially in the area of special needs. The school facility was outstanding in the learning opportunities it afforded the students and was exceptionally well-maintained. Student safety remained a priority and parents reported a high degree of satisfaction with the arrangements.

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The libraries, laboratories, and special use areas were of exceptional quality and used appropriately. Instructional technology was evident in all areas of the building and used well by all staff and students to enhance their learning. Resources for instructional and non-instructional activities were outstanding.

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## 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	160	16%
	Last year	104	11%
Teachers	151		92%
Students	223		97%

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

Survey results indicated a high degree of overall satisfaction with the school. The new leadership team was praised for its improved communication procedures by parents, students and teachers alike. School reports were considered helpful and timely. Teachers were judged as highly supportive by parents and students. English, mathematics and science were reported very favorably by almost all respondents. Special needs programs were judged as good and highly supportive of students.



## 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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