

INSPECTION REPORT

The Central School

Report published in February 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The Central School

Location	Al Nahda
Type of school	Private
Website	www.centralschool.net
Telephone	04-2674433
Address	P.O. Box 90697, Dubai
Principal	Syed Rasul Syed Mirza Ghalib
Curriculum	CBSE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	3-18 / Kindergarten 1 - Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	3304
Largest nationality group of students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	0
Date of the inspection	29th September to 3rd October 2013

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The context of the school

The Central School, located in Al Nahda, was founded in 1982. It provides an education from Kindergarten to Grade 12, for boys and girls aged three to 18 years. The school ran two separate sessions. A morning session for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Grade 2 and for girls from Grades 3 to 12. The afternoon session consisted of boys classes from Grades 3 to 12.

The school followed the New Indian Model Group of Schools' curriculum in Kindergarten, the National Council for Education and Research and Training syllabus (NCERT) from Grades 1 to 8 and the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) examination syllabuses from Grades 9 to 12. Students sat the Secondary School Examination in Grade 10 and Senior School Certificate in Grade 12.

At the time of the inspection, the roll was 3304 students. It had increased 16 per cent since the previous year. Almost one quarter of all students were in the Kindergarten and almost half were in the primary phase. Students of Indian nationality accounted for almost three quarters of all students. There were no Emirati students. The school had identified 91 students who had a special educational need. They were supported by five staff. There were 166 qualified teachers and two teaching assistants.

The school had recently added 18 new classrooms. The school library had been relocated and populated with additional books, two new computer rooms had been established, and sporting facilities upgraded.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Students' good attainment and progress in the strong Islamic Education curriculum;
- The good attitudes to learning particularly in the girls' section;
- The good understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness across all phases;
- Students' participation and success in a range of extra-curricular activities.

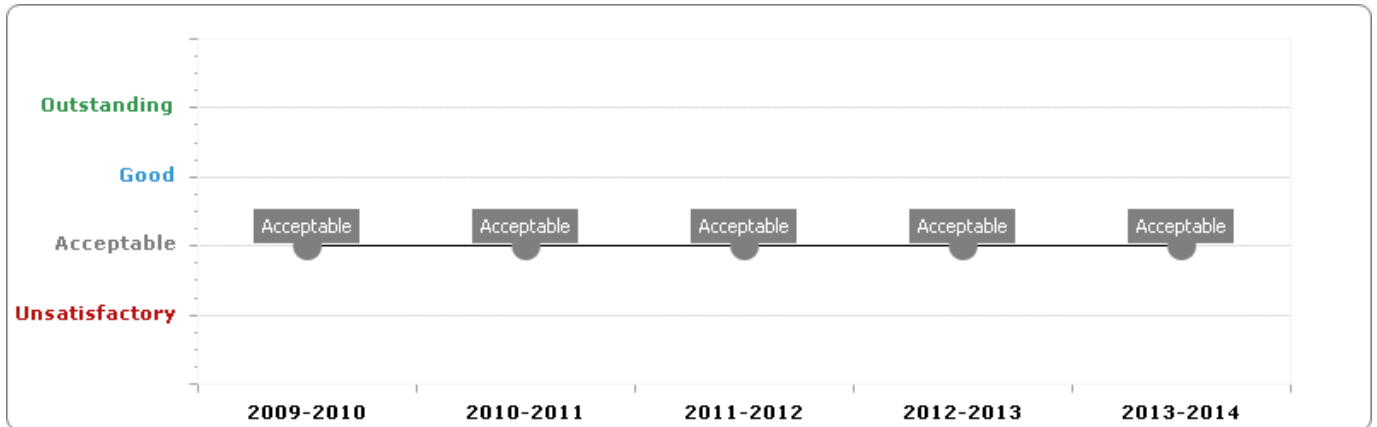
Recommendations

- Improve the school's self-evaluation through rigorous analysis of students' learning outcomes and utilising the information to inform planning for improvement.
- Improve students' ability to investigate, hypothesise, solve problems, interrogate data and think critically particularly in mathematics and science.
- Raise teachers' expectations of students' learning and design a curriculum which meets the needs of individuals.
- Use assessment processes in lessons to determine each student's level of understanding, and use this information to make teaching more effective.
- Improve all aspects of the identification and provision for students with a special educational need.
- Improve teachers' use of resources to enliven lessons, capture students' interest and make learning consistently relevant to their everyday lives.

Progress since the last inspection

- The growth in the number of students in the school;
- The improved compliance and provision for health and safety;
- The decline of provision and outcomes in a number of key subjects, especially in The Kindergarten;
- Improved staff-student relationships;
- An increased number of vocational courses for senior students.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Quality of students' learning skills	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Unsatisfactory
Parents and the community	Acceptable
Governance	Unsatisfactory
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in Islamic Education was good in all phases. Most students had good understanding of how Islam is applied in their everyday life. In Arabic as an additional language, attainment was acceptable in all phases. Most students were able to read simple, familiar paragraphs and could match sounds to letters. Writing skills were less developed. In English, children in Kindergarten had unsatisfactory attainment. They gained very few basic skills. In primary and middle phases, attainment of technical skills was acceptable but higher order skills of analysis, critical thinking and debate remained underdeveloped. In the secondary phase, the acquisition of these skills was restricted to the girls' section. Attainment in mathematics was acceptable in the Kindergarten but unsatisfactory in the primary phase. Most Kindergarten children were unable to apply their number knowledge to solve problems. Geometrical understanding in the primary phase was a weakness. Attainment was acceptable in the middle and secondary phases, although levels of attainment had fallen in the last two years in Grade 12 tests. Algebra and equations were strong elements in the secondary phase. Attainment in science was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and primary but acceptable in the middle and secondary phases. Whilst most students demonstrated reasonable theoretical knowledge, they were limited in their practical skill development due to the lack of sufficient laboratory facilities, resourcing and the design of the curriculum.

Progress in Islamic Education was good across the school. Most students had developed a deep understanding of the fundamental concepts of Islam. In Arabic as an additional language, progress was acceptable in primary but unsatisfactory in the middle and secondary phases. Most primary students gradually developed age-appropriate listening, speaking and reading skills. In middle and secondary, most students made limited progress in reading comprehension and most improved too little in their ability to express their thoughts orally. In English, progress was acceptable in all phases. Some progress was apparent in Kindergarten and primary classes in the acquisition of basic skills. Progress in secondary classes was strongest for Grades 10 to 12 girls, where most developed specific language skills. Progress in mathematics in the primary phase was unsatisfactory. Students made little progress in understanding the different strands of mathematics. In the Kindergarten, and the middle and secondary phases, progress was acceptable. In middle and secondary, students began to understand how the knowledge they had gained could be used to solve increasingly complex problems. Progress in science was hampered across Kindergarten and primary phases due to a lack of resources which restricted exploration, enquiry and experimentation. It was acceptable in middle and secondary where an increased number of practical investigations were offered.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

In the Kindergarten and primary, the quality of learning skills was unsatisfactory. The majority of students displayed positive attitudes to learning, but rarely worked independently. In poorly managed lessons, students became disengaged, often due to a lack of resources which restricted investigation. The absence of collaborative work reduced outcomes, but on the few occasions that group activities occurred, students responded well. Across all phases in many lessons, students were passive learners and few could explain what they had learned or how they could improve. They rarely made connections in their learning to the real world. Most instructional material in English, Arabic, mathematics and science was restricted to a text book. In Islamic Education, students' cultural awareness ensured a real world context. Some research and information communication technology (ICT) skills were apparent in the middle phase where learning was acceptable, but rarely in primary lessons. Whilst all students in the secondary sections had a positive attitude to learning, girls were improving their skills of collaborative and independent learning more quickly than boys. Many communicated their understanding well, often with the effective use of ICT. Most were developing critical thinking and related their learning to the wider world. In the boys' section, such opportunities were severely restricted by unimaginative approaches to learning. There was too great a reliance on text books. Overall the learning skills in secondary phase were acceptable.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Across the school, almost all students exhibited mature attitudes and good behaviour. They exercised self-reliance and self-control. They were respectful to teachers and one another. They co-operated well with each other. Overall, girls were more respectful and better behaved than boys. The school encouraged all students to adopt a healthy lifestyle and most exhibited sensible eating and fitness habits. There were limited opportunities for Kindergarten children to take any responsibilities. In all other phases, students willingly took on responsibilities, particularly in higher grades where student councils supported the smooth running of the school. Attendance across the school was acceptable. Almost all students were punctual. Students across the school displayed good levels of understanding and appreciation, and middle and senior students had a secure understanding of the relevance and impact of these values on everyday life in Dubai. Students' appreciation of the culture and traditions of UAE were well developed throughout the school. Most understood their own culture and celebrated it when appropriate. They were aware of the breadth of cultural diversity around the world. Students across the school recognised their responsibilities as members of the school community. They took on key roles, but their opportunities for input into the school's development were limited. Almost all students showed a positive work ethic. Senior girls used their initiative and delivered ideas through presentations. Younger students and boys in all phases were less independent thinkers and

had fewer opportunities to develop creativity or to communicate ideas. Students valued their school and participated in a range of environmental and community initiative. They often shared their understanding with peers during assemblies. The Eco Club was useful in embedding an environmental consciousness across the school.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable except in Kindergarten where it was unsatisfactory. In mathematics and science, teaching in primary classes was also unsatisfactory. Teachers dominated the learning process, providing limited time for students to apply what they had learned. In better lessons, different teaching strategies were used, such as discussions, group work, research and student presentations. All lessons followed a similar planning format; however, objectives were more frequently focused on subject matter than on expected skills development, particularly in mathematics and science. Most teachers gave examples of how learning was relevant to everyday life but did not make the best use of resources to engage students or enliven lessons. Lesson plans did not identify how lessons would be adjusted to meet the different learning needs of students. Lesson activities were, for the most part, exactly the same for all students and linked more to curriculum coverage. Teaching in the key subjects of Islamic Education, Arabic and English was generally stronger than in mathematics and science.

Assessment was unsatisfactory in all phases. Assessment data were not being used effectively to improve teaching and learning. The school assessed students' progress using a range of tests. Through a system of recording and comparing the results of tests, the school was aware of students' factual knowledge but had little information about their levels of understanding. Teachers' understanding of formative assessment was not well developed. In Kindergarten and primary classes, questioning mainly required one word answers and supplementary questions were rare. In the middle and secondary phases, questioning often required students to explain their answers. However, inaccurate answers were frequently ignored. Opportunities were missed to discuss where students had gone wrong. Students were not sufficiently involved in evaluating their own work. Feedback by teachers in exercise books was limited. Students could not explain their strengths and weaknesses, and did not know their next steps in learning for improvement. The use of assessment information to adjust what different groups of students were taught was unsatisfactory; therefore, less able students struggled and the teachers' expectations for most other students including high achievers were too low.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and acceptable in primary, middle and secondary phases. The curriculum for Kindergarten children was not age-appropriate and did not provide sufficient opportunities for them to be active in their learning. The school curriculum elsewhere covered an appropriate range of subjects and offered a choice of five languages. The curriculum in Grades 9 to 12 closely adhered to the CBSE examination board content and provided an appropriate level of challenge for most students. The process of curriculum review was not documented and was limited in scope. Textbooks and activities were reviewed but little analysis occurred on its suitability in meeting the needs of all students. Cross-curricular links and differentiated learning were limited. There were sufficient extra-curricular activities for most students to be involved in art, music, dance and various clubs. The school made some use of the surroundings for enhancing the curriculum. The students in the environmental club helped to embed sound environmental principles in the school and they had received several environmental awards. There was no provision for students with special educational needs. The school is not fully compliant with the Ministry of Education requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic as additional language.

The curriculum design was unsatisfactory in all phases except in secondary, where it was acceptable. It did not effectively cater for the educational and personal development of all groups of students, particularly students with special educational needs and those with low attainment. It provided some additional opportunities for the oldest students to pursue their learning, interests and aspirations, particularly in Grades 11 and 12. Their learning was enriched through participation in a range of extra-curricular clubs and visits. Students were offered five languages which reflected their cultural backgrounds. Opportunities to develop critical thinking, problem-solving and independent learning were not effectively developed across the whole school. There were too few modifications to the curriculum for and the gifted and talented students.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for ensuring students were healthy and safe were acceptable across all phases. Not all written policies to ensure that students' safety were in place, but most staff understood their roles and responsibilities. Many deficiencies mentioned in the previous report had been addressed, including bus safety procedures. A few buses still lacked reliable air-conditioning. Emergency evacuations were practised twice a year. The school canteen provided some healthy options and many students bought healthy packed lunches to school. Overall, the school was clean but there was scope for improved hygiene in bathrooms. The grounds were secure. Physical education and sporting activities for all were limited due to a lack of suitable facilities. A child protection policy and procedures were understood well by all.

The quality of support was unsatisfactory across all phases. Some staff were aware of personal needs, but the school lacked a systematic approach to recording personal development. However, relationships between students and staff were courteous and respectful. Students who had special educational needs or were gifted and talented were not clearly identified. Consequently, there was only a limited overview of students' continuity and progression. Early identification of students with special educational needs by their teachers was sporadic and the process lacked rigour. This limited provision and hampered progress. The few individual plans written were vague and almost all teachers failed to understand how to offer support. The management of behaviour was more effective in the girls' section than in the boys'. The school had records of attendance and punctuality, but parents of absent pupils were not contacted promptly.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was acceptable. The longstanding Principal was supported by a Headmaster and Headmistress. All had a working understanding of the school, but their individual visions for its future varied. They were inhibited in their strategic planning and change management by a paucity of valid and reliable assessment information. Consequently, they were not sufficiently attuned to promote positive learning outcomes, particularly for Kindergarten and early primary children. Distributive leadership was apparent but leaders did not have a broad enough overview of the school. Relationships and communication were professional, but the leaders' capacity to improve the quality of provision for all students was weak.

Self-evaluation was unsatisfactory. The school had involved a broad range of stakeholders in its self-evaluation process and provided ample descriptions of its working processes. However, leaders did not analyse assessment information well enough to determine the school's key strengths and areas for development. As a result, the school's improvement plan was narrow and only based upon the 2012 DSIB inspection report recommendations, rather than being an aspirational document based upon areas for development as determined by the school. In addition, there had been minimal success in addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection report. Monitoring of teaching and learning was systematic but did not have sufficient emphasis on students' learning outcomes.

Relationships with parents and the community were acceptable. There was some opportunity for parental involvement through the school's PTA and during parent evenings but only minimal involvement through the Board of Governors. Parents stressed the regularity of communication which supported engagement; however, a few commented that student report cards had insufficient information to guide the next steps for learning. A number had complaints about the quality of teaching, the conditions on school buses and

hygiene around the school. A number felt that they did not have a voice in the decisions made by governors. There were minimal community links.

Governance was unsatisfactory. The level of representation of parental and community stakeholders on the Board of Governors was minimal. Wider views were seldom sought, resulting in little opportunity for parents to have direct influence in the decision-making process. Meetings were held only twice a year, which restricted opportunities for timely interrogation of the school's information. There was little evidence of Governors holding the school to account for its performance and quality. The governors were not sufficiently involved in ensuring that all statutory requirements in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language were met. They did not ensure sufficient resources, for example specialist rooms, ICT and key resources for Kindergarten and the primary phase.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. There were sufficient qualified teachers within the school. Whilst there was a satisfactory balance of expertise, there were too few members of staff who had a secure understanding of how students in the lower school learn most effectively. The premises and facilities provided a generally clean and safe environment for learning. Most students' learning was restricted as there were too few resources.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students with special education needs (SEN) were enrolled, unless the school was unable to provide appropriate accommodation, teaching expertise or resources to address their particular needs. There was good involvement of parents in helping the school to determine the needs of their children; information was shared and parents were encouraged to support their children's progress in school. There was limited identification of students with SEN within the school, and only 23 had individual educational plans. Curriculum modifications were too few and learning outcomes were not rigorously tracked and measured against specific targets. In the few cases where support was given in class, it was often when a more able student sat beside the student with special educational needs and helped. However, support was variable across the school, and was often unsatisfactory.

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 judgments. 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	574	38%
	Last year	490	35%
Teachers	83		49%
Students	226		67%

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

The following statements were based on the survey response at the time of the inspection. The above response figures are the most up-to-date and accurate available prior to publication.

Most parents and students recognised the school's strength in teaching Islamic Education and Islamic values. Both groups felt that progress was less than good in Arabic as a second language. Parents were particularly positive about KHDA's role in providing information about schools from inspection. Few were secure in their understanding of the school's admission policy and provision for students with a special educational need. Most parents and students thought that the school did not provide sufficient technology to support learning. Few parents were aware of the school's results in the international benchmark testing of Testing in Mathematics and Science Skills (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Parents and students expressed a desire for more curricular options. A number of students indicated that the poor conditions of buses were a cause for concern. Teachers were overwhelmingly supportive of the school with regard to all aspects of provision.

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.

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How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:

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