

INSPECTION REPORT

German International School Dubai

Report published in April 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT German International School Dubai

Location	Al Quoz
Type of school	Private
Website	www.germanschool.ae
Telephone	04-3386006
Address	P O Box 391162, Dubai
Principal	Gert Blach
Curriculum	German
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-19 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	536
Largest nationality group of Students	German
Number of Emirati students	0
Date of the inspection	24th to 26th March 2014

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The context of the school

The German International School is situated in Al Quoz. It is a private school under the auspices of the Standing Committee of German Ministers of Culture. It has 536 boys and girls from Kindergarten to Grade 12, aged three to 19 years. The students are of several different nationalities but almost all have at least one parent who is German. The students speak a range of first languages.

The German International School provides an education based on the curriculum of the German federal state of Thuringia, modified to conform to the specific requirements of the Ministry of Education in the UAE. Since 2011 it has had the approval of the Kultusministerkonferenz to prepare students for the internationally recognised German school-leaving examination (Deutsche Internationale Abiturprüfung) at the end of Grade 12. In addition it prepares students for the German secondary school certificate (Realschulabschluss); they graduate at the end of Grade 10. A few students leave school at the end of Grade 9 with a Hauptschule certificate after having passed an examination.

Including the senior leadership team, there were 63 teachers, all appropriately qualified. Approximately one quarter of teachers had worked in the school for one year or less. Almost all teachers were trained in Germany. In Kindergarten, teachers were supported by 6 teaching assistants.

The Principal was appointed in August 2013. The head of Kindergarten was also appointed early in the academic year and at the time of the inspection he was also acting head of elementary school, and would remain in this position until an appointment could be made.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- Standards of attainment and progress in Kindergarten and secondary English and progress in Arabic as an additional language in elementary school;
- The high quality, respectful relationships students had with their teachers and other students;
- Students' understanding and respect for both Arabic and Germanic cultures;
- Children's high quality experiences, including play, which led to very good personal and social development in the Kindergarten;
- The governance and support provided by the School Governing body.

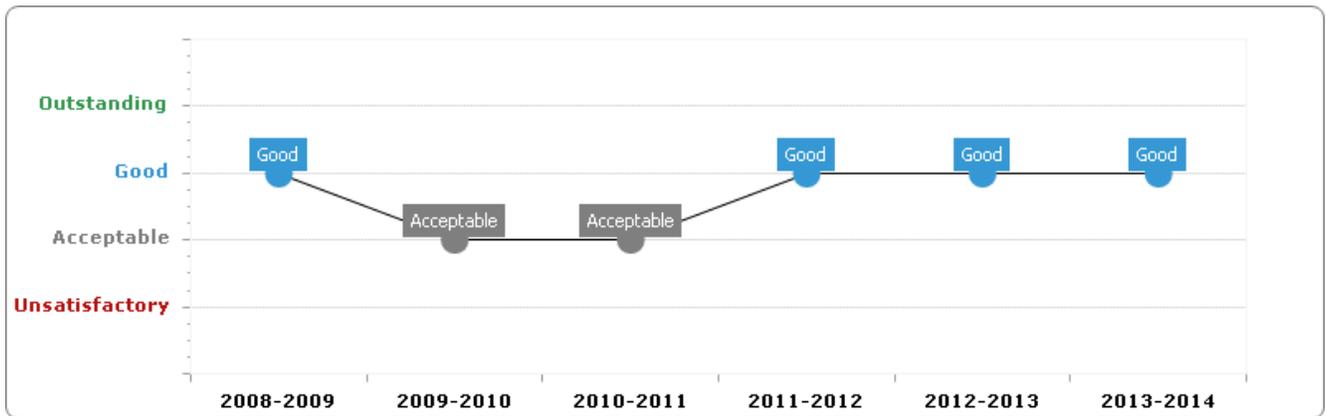
Recommendations

- Improve progress and attainment, in secondary German and mathematics and attainment in secondary Islamic education;
- Improve the quality of lesson planning at each phase to more effectively meet the learning needs of all students;
- Modify the curriculum to meet the learning needs of students with special educational needs and the diverse needs of older students;
- Ensure that the school has a clear shared understanding of good practice in learning and teaching;
- Make self-evaluation processes systematic, more robust and embedded across the school and linked to improvement planning,

Progress since the last inspection

- There had been improvements in attainment in Islamic Education in secondary;
- The principal had established a 'quality control group' to standardise assessments and ensure greater continuity of learning from one stage to the next to promote better progress. However, this initiative was in its early stages of implementation and had not had sufficient time to impact on student's learning.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Elementary	Secondary
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Secondary
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	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?

	KG	Elementary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good
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	Acceptable
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Outstanding
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was generally good or better in all key subjects. In Islamic Education, attainment was good in the elementary stages and most students could talk in detail about the Prophet Mohamed and his life. In Secondary, attainment was acceptable and most students could mention aspects of the Judgment Day. Students' attainment was good throughout the school in Arabic, both as a first and as an additional language. Almost all first language students showed a good understanding of what they read. Arabic additional language elementary students could talk at length about themselves and responded well to questions. In English, attainment was outstanding in Kindergarten and secondary and good in elementary. Kindergarten children developed excellent listening and speaking skills. Elementary school students acquired a wider vocabulary and a greater grammatical proficiency. Most secondary students' listening and speaking skills were excellent. They could read with understanding, express their ideas in writing and the best students wrote in fluent, coherent and idiomatic English. In German, attainment was good in Kindergarten and the elementary school as most students demonstrated sound language skills. In secondary, attainment was acceptable, writing skills were not as good as speaking. In mathematics attainment was good in Kindergarten and elementary and acceptable in secondary. Children in Kindergarten could recognise numbers up to 20 and place them in sequence. Elementary students worked confidently and independently on a range of mathematics problems including number and shape. Secondary students were competent in most aspects but weaker in investigation and enquiry. Attainment was good in science throughout the school. Students demonstrated strong knowledge and investigative skills. They were very good at relating their knowledge to real world issues.

Progress was generally good in most phases and key subjects. The majority of elementary school students made good progress in understanding Islamic manners; in secondary, the majority of students made good progress in developing a detailed knowledge and deeper understanding of the Pillars of Islam. Progress was good in Arabic as a first language in elementary school due to effective teaching strategies whereas in secondary, progress was acceptable. Progress in speaking and writing was inhibited by low teacher expectations and limited opportunities for practice. In Arabic as an additional language, elementary students made outstanding progress in developing their skills and using what they learnt to express themselves. Progress was good for most students in secondary when measured against the time they spent studying the subject. In German progress was good in Kindergarten and elementary school; in secondary it was acceptable as most students met the targets. In English progress was good in elementary and outstanding across other phases. The early development of speaking and listening skills enabled students to gain confidence and make rapid progress. Bilingual teaching and teachers' high expectations also contributed to students' excellent development in English. In mathematics progress was good in Kindergarten and elementary and acceptable in secondary. Kindergarten children were quick to develop

their understanding of number. By the end of elementary school, students were working above expected levels. Students throughout the school demonstrated good progress in science. Over time, they acquired deep scientific knowledge as well as improved experimental skills.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning skills was good throughout the school. Students were eager learners and their enthusiasm and resilience were demonstrated by their prolonged concentration on tasks within lessons. They collaborated exceptionally well with each other and this helped to broaden their understanding of the topics being studied. They frequently were able to make cross curricular links and explored related information that deepened and challenged their understanding. They thought creatively and could compose and provide solutions for challenging "what if" questions. They were effective problem solvers and were proficient at drawing on a wide range of knowledge. Their independent learning skills were developing positively. Their solutions to problems occasionally required complex reasoning. Mathematics skills were frequently used to gather data, analyse it and use results to solve complex scientific questions.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Student's personal responsibility was good in all phases. They mingled within and across age groups in an amiable and relaxed manner. Relationships with adults were friendly and courteous and students showed confidence and maturity. Students valued a healthy lifestyle and made wise choices about their diet. They pursued lively activities in the playground and many participated in sport. Attendance was good.

Students across all phases demonstrated an outstanding understanding of Islamic values in contemporary society in Dubai. They were aware of teachings from the Holy Qu'ran and both Muslims and non-Muslims participated in celebrating Islamic events in the school. They spoke and wrote in Arabic about Dubai customs and enjoyed dressing in Arab and international dress. Exhibitions of food and displays in school celebrated Emirati traditions. Students understood their German heritage and enjoyed the international nature of the school. The curriculum enriched their appreciation of other cultures.

Community and environmental responsibility were acceptable across all phases. Students were responsible members of the school community. They elected class representatives who, led by the Heads of School,

formed the School Council. This body raised issues with the principal and had influence in the school in organising activities and formulating rules. Students raised funds for charity and celebrated community events such as Martinmas. They were industrious and some were successful in enterprise activities. They kept the school litter-free, engaged in some recycling activities and were aware of conservation issues.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was good across all phases. Teachers had a good knowledge of their subject area, knew the ways that their students learned, and could plan and deliver lessons effectively. A minority of lessons included effective strategies designed to meet the range of student's learning needs. Teachers had strong personal relationships with their students. Students knew that their teachers cared about them personally as well as about their academic performance. This resulted in strong engagement by almost all students during lessons. Information and communication technology (ICT) was employed frequently by teachers as a presentation tool but rarely used as an investigative or experimental learning tool. Teachers' time management within lessons was generally good. The level of challenge in the early grades was not sufficient for the most gifted learners. Teaching in lessons in other subjects such as history and physical education were of good quality. Outstanding teaching was seen in some classrooms such as in lessons for Arabic as an additional a language.

The quality of assessment was good across the school. Students' performance data was analysed effectively and was available to all staff. Subject coordinators were required to report on the analysis and consider appropriate actions to improve student performance. Teachers had a good knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses and often gave oral feedback, but there was little evidence of constructive written feedback in students' work. Students rarely received guidance on what they needed to do next to move to the next level. Assessment in lessons was inconsistent but good examples were seen in Islamic Education, Arabic and English. The school had improved the student tracking system with student progress being regularly monitored and prompt action taken when underachievement was noted. However, most teachers did not use the resulting student data to effectively plan lessons so that the needs of all groups of students were met.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good across all phases and had a clear rationale. It was based on the curriculum of the State of Thuringia, which was used by almost all German international schools worldwide. It complied with UAE requirements for teaching Arabic and Islamic Education. Teachers especially those in elementary school took good account of the local context of the school in Dubai, when planning. At the secondary level, the core curricula complied with the national standards required for the Internationale Abiturprüfung. The science curriculum successfully established meaningful cross-curricular links. The school had developed the curriculum for grades 11-12 in French, arts, music and ethics. In the secondary stage, the school offered programmes to help students to prepare for the world of work. In the Kindergarten the curriculum was enriched with local themes and topics. Teachers regularly reviewed each stage of the curriculum. A range of extra-curricular activities was available after school one day a week.

The curriculum designed to meet the individual needs of students was acceptable across the school. A minority of teachers modified the curriculum to meet the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs. When teachers did not make adequate adjustments to the curriculum, students, particularly those with special educational needs, did not have appropriate learning experiences and did not make sufficient progress. The schools' curriculum was designed to provide a flexible approach to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of students following the Hauptschule, Realschule and Gymnasium programmes. However, in practice, the provision was not able to meet the diverse needs of the entire student group. At each stage, the learning needs of gifted and talented students were not being fully met.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements to ensure students' health and safety were good overall. The building was secure, clean and tidy and resources and facilities were well maintained. The school doctor and nurse provided good care for students and supported their well-being. Efficient systems ensured the health and safety of the school community and good records were maintained. Healthy lifestyles were promoted through regular physical education, including swimming, and by enabling students to make healthy food choices. Recent building work outside the school had restricted the access of vehicles and increased the risk of potential hazards; the school had worked hard to address this issue. The school had adequate arrangements for ensuring child protection; however, these procedures were not set out clearly in a written policy and did not feature highly enough in the staff induction process.

The quality of support was generally good. Relationships between students and staff, and between the students themselves was a key strength of the school. They underpinned a strong inclusive ethos of support and respect for others. The school's systems were successful in promoting good levels of attendance and punctuality across the school. Assessment procedures provided the capacity for accurate identification of the specific learning needs of students. Teachers did not always use these results effectively enough to ensure that support was sufficiently targeted and focused. As a consequence the levels of progress for students with special educational needs was often much less than that of other students. Systems to monitor and develop the personal development of students were of a high quality. However, the lack of capacity within the pastoral team restricted the level of support which was available for students.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Overall, the quality of leadership was good. The recently appointed Principal had a clear vision for the school and had correctly identified areas for improvement. The day to day practices among teachers varied and there was not a shared view on what constitutes good practice in teaching and learning. With the full support of the Board, the Principal was introducing more systematic approaches to managing the school. He was assisted by a senior management team consisting of the Vice Principal, heads of Kindergarten and secondary school and subject coordinators. The impact of these leaders on the learning experiences of students varied. A few were very effective at maintaining high standards and improving provision. Given the plans to improve and the continued commitment of the skilful teachers, the school had the capacity to improve further.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The Principal knew the school well. He observed lessons and recognised where the strengths and weaknesses in students' attainment were. However, the school did not have systematic or robust approaches to evaluate its effectiveness. Although some teachers had observed others teaching, self-evaluation was not embedded across the school. Professional reviews of teachers had taken place but there was a lack of data on teacher's performance. Planned improvements from the last inspection had been hindered by changes in staffing.

The school had good links with parents which supported students' learning. Links with parents who had children in the Kindergarten phase were particularly strong. Communication between the school and parents was effective. Parents could readily make their views known on school issues by contacting teachers, managers or a member of the Parents' Committee. Reports and regular meetings with teachers

kept parents abreast of their children’s progress and attainment. A few links had been established with other schools and some organisations in Dubai.

Governance was outstanding. Parents, including members of the Parents Committee, teachers and students were represented on the Board. It had a good blend of experienced members and recent appointees. Board members were successful in promoting the school’s unique Germanic ethos. The Board held the Principal to account for the schools’ performance. It provided strategic leadership for the school and was heavily involved in planning a move to larger premises. A representative of the Board acted as an additional channel for communication and worked with the school to facilitate the Board’s decisions.

Management including staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. The school was well managed, and all teachers were well qualified. However, the special needs teacher who resigned in 2013, had not been replaced leading to deficiency in this area of the school’s work. An induction programme was provided for new teachers and both internal and external training opportunities were provided. The buildings were safe and very well maintained. The Kindergarten was well resourced; other areas of the school were adequately resourced except for the provision of computers for students’ use. This restricted opportunity for student research.

[View judgements](#)

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

The leaders of the school had a clear commitment to improving the quality of provision for students with special educational needs and ensured that there was a highly inclusive ethos throughout the school. Parents and students were involved in the design and review of appropriate support plans which were personalised and relevant. The lack of appropriately experienced and qualified staff had impacted upon the quality and consistency of practice and outcomes for students. The policies related to special educational needs contained high quality guidance for parents and professionals and described effective systems of identification and support. Arrangements for identifying those students with special educational needs were of a high quality and were generally effective. However, the quality of written guidance was usually not reflected in either teaching practice or in the levels of student progress. In many lessons, planning did not take sufficient account of those with special educational needs. In these lessons curriculum modification and support were not used consistently or effectively enough to bridge the gap between the needs of students and the challenge of learning. In Arabic, modifications were much more frequent and support was more targeted. This ensured that most students made good or better progress. This was not

the case in most subjects and therefore, too often, the progress of students with special educational needs was less than that of other students.

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

Almost all teachers of Arabic knew their subject well and were secure in their understanding of how students learn best. However, the application of this knowledge was not consistently strong across the school, particularly in secondary. Overall, teachers generally made adequate use of resources other than textbooks, especially in elementary classes. Good levels of teacher-student interaction were maintained throughout most lessons. Generally teachers' expectations for students' achievement were appropriate, with the exception of a few classes, where expectations in speaking and writing were too low. In the best lessons, students were appropriately challenged, there was a lively pace and sufficient opportunity for independent learning. In some classes more effective arrangements were required to meet the needs of different groups of students. The school's Arabic curriculum had a clear rationale and it was reviewed annually. The school was compliant with Ministry of Education requirements for the teaching time for Arabic across all classes. There were a few cross-curricular links to enhance students' learning. Further enhancement of opportunities for speaking and independent writing were required to accelerate students' progress in the secondary phase.

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	169	57%
	Last year	204	66%
Teachers	35		55%
Students	25		62%

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

Most parents, teachers and students who responded to the questionnaire were satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. Most parents reported that their children enjoyed school. Almost all students felt safe in school and on school buses and thought that they were well looked after in school. Almost all teachers and the majority of students reported that the behaviour of students was good. Most parents thought that their children were making good progress in Islamic Education, English and Mathematics. A majority of parents thought that their children were making good progress in Arabic as a first and as an additional language and in science. Most students said that teachers' marking and comments on their work helped them to improve their learning. Most parents said that school reports and the regular meetings with teachers were helpful. A majority of teachers and parents thought that the school was well led and that staff dealt well with incidents of bullying.

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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