

# INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai British School

Report published in April 2014

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai British School

Location	Emirates Hills
Type of school	Private
Website	<a href="http://www.dubaibritishschool.ae">www.dubaibritishschool.ae</a>
Telephone	04-3619361
Address	P.O. Box 37828, Springs 3, Emirates Hill, Dubai
Principal	Mr. Mark Ford
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18/Foundation Stage to Year 13
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	1082
Largest nationality group of Students	British
Number of Emirati students	0
Date of the inspection	25th to 28th November

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## The context of the school

Dubai British School is situated in the Emirates Hills district of Dubai. The school follows the National Curriculum for England, from the Foundation Stage (FS) through to the Post-16 phase. Students are entered for GCSE and IGCSE at the end of the secondary phase and GCE Advanced level examinations at the end of the post-16 phase.

At the time of the inspection there were 1082 students on roll. Fifty-four different nationalities were represented among the student population. Approximately 62 per cent of students were from the United Kingdom. Just over one hundred students had been identified by the school as having some form of special educational need (SEN). Almost a quarter of all students had been identified as gifted and talented.

There were 83 full-time teachers, including the senior leadership team. The teachers in the school had a range of academic and teaching qualifications. They were supported by 35 teaching assistants for learning support and counselling. Approximately a fifth of the teachers were appointed for the start of the school year.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

### Key strengths

- Outstanding attainment and progress in the Foundation Stage and in primary science;
- Excellent students' attitudes to learning and overall behaviour throughout the school;
- Community engagement and after-school activities enriching outstanding curriculum provision;
- High quality leadership and management of the school has generated an excellent team spirit and a common drive for improvement among all members of school community.

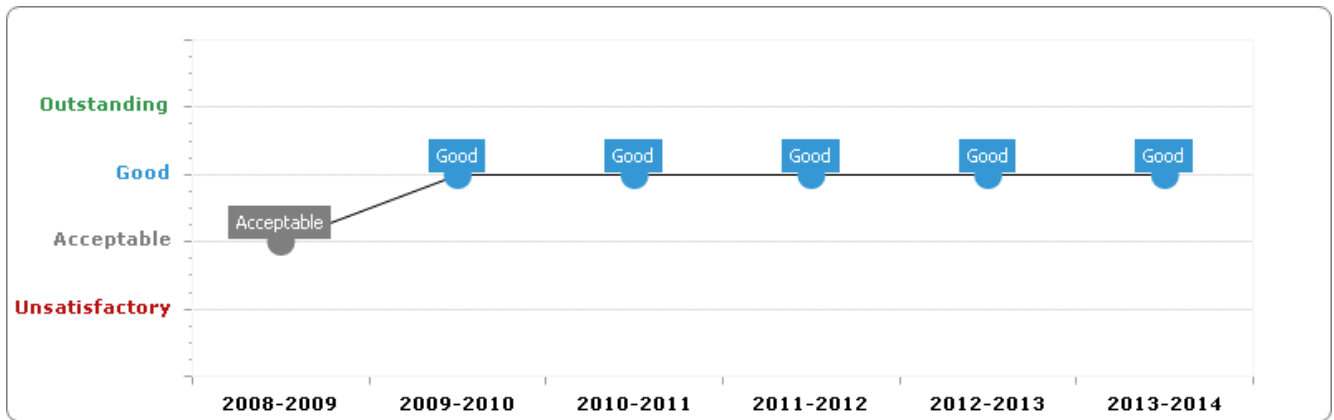
### Recommendations

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Reduce the amount of acceptable teaching and raise its overall quality to that of the best through the sharing of best practice;
- Further develop rigorous procedures for self-evaluation to ensure accurate reporting and target-setting.

## Progress since the last inspection

The school had made very good progress towards meeting the recommendations in the previous report. Attainment had improved in secondary Arabic as a first language and English. Through high quality teaching and learning, attainment and progress in primary science had improved to outstanding. The school had sustained its effectiveness in almost all areas and had improved from good to outstanding in several respects. In raising the quality of the learning environment, the outstanding governance in partnership with stakeholders had improved students' academic and personal experiences at the school.

## Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

In Islamic Education, primary students showed adequate memorisation skills and were aware of Seerah facts. Older students understood key aspects of Islamic faith and many social aspects of Islam but their ability to cite contextual evidence from Qur'an was limited. In Arabic as a first language, students' listening and reading skills were secure but reading and writing skills were inconsistent. In Arabic as an additional language, students could decode Arabic sounds and their reading comprehension skills were in line with expectations. However, writing and speaking were under-developed. In English, primary students were developing good skills in listening, speaking and reading. Writing was less well developed, with work less well-presented in lower primary years. Secondary students had a good understanding of written texts, both informative and literary. By the later stages, they could speak at length and with confidence on a variety of topics. Attainment in public examinations in English literature at the secondary stage was much stronger than attainment in English language. Mathematics was outstanding in Foundation Stage where the learning experience for children was consistently stimulating and exciting. Students achieved high standards in science because they acquired relevant practical and enquiry skills through their involvement in exciting investigation processes.

Most students made adequate progress in understanding Islamic beliefs and stories of the Prophets but a minority were not developing deeper knowledge of the accurate application of basic Islamic forms of worships. In Arabic as a first and second language, students made better progress in developing their Arabic vocabulary but were less confident in speaking. Students in Years 10 and 11 made good progress in their appreciation of literary texts in English. After a good start in developing their number skills and awareness of shape and space in Foundation Stage, students made good progress in all mathematical skills though the rest of the school. In science, students progressively built on their early outstanding knowledge and applied this understanding through the disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

Learning skills were outstanding in Foundation Stage where children enjoyed discovering new things through play and interesting experiences. Children learned to share and grew in confidence. Through well-structured play they developed their thinking skills. In Primary, Secondary and Post-16 learning was good. Students worked well together, shared their ideas and sometimes carried out joint research projects and scientific investigations. In Arabic and Islamic Education learning skills were acceptable but there were fewer opportunities for students to explore ideas and think about broader concepts. Students were encouraged to

take responsibility for their own learning, reviewing their learning targets in subjects and critically reviewing their own work as well as that of their peers. In a few lessons students were less engaged because their work was not interesting or the pace of the lesson was slow and their attention was lost.

[View judgements](#)

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

Personal responsibility was outstanding in all phases. Almost all students were very well behaved both in and out of class. They treated one another with respect and were polite and constructive in their dealings with adults. They made informed choices about healthy living. Attendance was outstanding.

Students' understanding of Islamic values was good. They understood and appreciated the relevance of Islamic values to life in Dubai and were conscious of the need to show respect to those values. While they were very knowledgeable about Dubai, students were less familiar with life outside the cities in the rest of the UAE. They did not have a full awareness of other world cultures and lacked breadth in their appreciation of what other cultures had contributed to their own.

Community and environmental responsibility was outstanding. Students participated in a wide range of activities, supporting local charities, the centre for autism and giving aid to migrant workers. They worked hard and showed determination. Older students participated in work experience and in a range of sporting and cultural activities which brought them into contact with other schools. Their involvement in an international enterprise scheme taught them transferable business skills. At all stages they were very aware of their environmental responsibilities.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was good in primary, secondary and post-16 phases and outstanding in Foundation Stage. Most teachers showed good subject knowledge, especially in explaining new concepts to students and in encouraging lively discussions in class. In Foundation Stage, teachers had an excellent understanding of how children learn and all areas of learning were covered well in interesting lessons. Resources were used well to stimulate learning. In primary and secondary phases, lessons were planned carefully. Teachers set clear learning objectives for the lessons which were shared with students. Relationships between teachers and students were extremely strong so students felt well supported and able to ask their teachers for help when they needed it. Good information was collected by teachers on the progress students made. However, the

use of this information to plan tasks in lessons to challenge students of different abilities was not consistent. Teaching was effective in science. It was acceptable but developing in Islamic Education and Arabic where the range of teaching strategies used was improving.

Assessment was good in Primary, Secondary and Post-16. In Foundation Stage, assessment was outstanding because data was used very effectively to plan tasks in lessons that met the needs of all groups. In the other phases, effective systems for tracking students' progress enabled teachers to be aware of students' emerging needs. Assessment data were accurate. Summative assessments and measures of progress were analysed. The outcomes informed end-of-year target setting for students and teachers, and resulted in data driven targets and intervention records. When given the opportunities, students were accurate in assessing their own learning and that of others. There was some outstanding marking in a few subjects with students responding to teachers' comments and setting informal targets. Changes were made to planning on a day-to-day basis as a result of ongoing assessment. There was an expectation that plans will be adjusted where necessary, although the practice was not consistent in all classes. Medium-term plans were also adjusted in response to assessment information.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was outstanding in all phases. The school had established a very clear rationale for the curriculum to fulfil the unique potential of all students, irrespective of their abilities. There were strong procedures for transition from one phase to the next. This ensured consistency, continuity and progression in learning. Transition from the Foundation Stage to Year 1 had greatly improved. Senior leaders had delegated clear responsibility to subject leaders to review curriculum provision based on students' needs and best practices. Innovations included the improvement of discrete subject-skills, accelerated learning and the development of the "International Primary Curriculum". There were also exciting citizenship, leadership and work-experience opportunities for the older students. Students were motivated to apply skills learnt in one subject to improve learning in other areas of their work. Recent initiatives to use ICT across more subjects were an excellent example of this. The school provided an extensive range of enrichment activities, including sporting clubs, visits to places of interest and in-school projects. These activities significantly boosted student engagement and motivation to learn.

The curriculum design to meet the needs of students was outstanding. There was a strong emphasis on modifying curriculum provision in all subjects by developing students' listening and thinking skills. The curriculum was also often modified to provide outstanding opportunities for students who made slower

progress or who had special educational needs. There was a wide choice of exam courses based on students' interests and needs which helped them in their career choices.

[View judgements](#)

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

Arrangements to protect and support students were outstanding. The school was maintained to a very high standard and all areas were kept clean. Security was in place at all entrance and exit gates and parents' cars were directed to appropriate drop off points. Bus travel arrangements were very well organised and regular vehicle checks took place. The clinic provided excellent care for the students with regular health checks taking place. Health advice was given regularly and the promotion of healthy eating was ongoing; the recently upgraded canteen served only healthy foods. Clinic staff, in conjunction with the counsellors, also promoted the students' emotional health. Child protection guidelines were in place and teachers were aware of the procedures to follow.

The quality of support was outstanding. Staff student relationships were outstanding. At all times cordial relationships were noted between staff and students. Students approached teachers for advice which was willingly given. Attendance was carefully monitored and issues of punctuality were responded to promptly. Excellent strategies were in place to identify students with SEN. Students were supported through modifications of the curriculum, in class interventions and a limited number of withdrawals. Student counsellors provided high quality advice and support for students. They also helped to facilitate transfer for students between the different levels of the school and post-school destinations. A careers guidance teacher enabled students make good subject and career choices through lectures, provision of work experience and advice on third level education opportunities.

[View judgements](#)

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

The leadership of the school was outstanding. The principal set a very strong personal example and provided a clear strategic lead. Leaders at all levels, including students and parents, felt empowered. The senior leadership team was well-supported by an enhanced middle management team that drove the school's distributive leadership ambitions. Relations were professional and communication was clear, helping teachers and students meet the school's high expectations.

The self-evaluation process was good and becoming embedded in the everyday life of the school. It was rigorously carried out and all teaching staff contributed to it. Detailed analysis of students' performance

enabled the school to know itself well. The school drew upon this analysis to make departmental and whole-school plans, which were comprehensive. The school's evaluation of itself was confirmed in most aspects. Thorough performance management was positively impacting upon teaching quality and professional development. The school had successfully addressed the recommendations from the previous report and had the capacity to continue to improve.

Partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding. Parents were involved in the life of the school and were pleased with what it offered. Consistent and productive partnerships ensured that parents and carers were engaged well with their children's learning and the school's work. The school's systems for keeping parents informed about aspects of its work ensured that parents had co-ordinated, up-to-date, accurate and timely information. There were regular information evenings for parents throughout the school along with termly meetings between teachers and parents to discuss target setting and progress. The school had an active Parents Association (PFA). Mutually beneficial links with other schools and businesses significantly added to students' overall school experience.

Governance was outstanding. Members of the Foundation and Advisory Boards were readily available to meet and discuss with the parents and students. Governors held the school closely to account for its work and outcomes by regular monitoring. Parental and staff representation on the Advisory Board ensured a strong stakeholder involvement in the school's self-evaluation. Governors had strongly supported the drive to raise the quality of teaching in Islamic Education and Arabic through additional resourcing and group-wide training initiatives to enhance in-school developments. Excellent additional facilities had improved already high quality resources and these had been planned and delivered with the stakeholders' views at the forefront.

Staffing and resources were outstanding and the excellent day-to-day management of the school ensured very efficient running. The premises had been extended to provide high quality facilities in all phases, most notably the Foundation Stage outdoor activities area, the additional science laboratories and the new auditorium. These had all impacted positively on the students' experiences at school. All staff were appropriately qualified and deployed. Staff turnover, particularly at leadership level, was below the averages for this type of school in this setting. In classrooms, corridors and other areas, there were excellent displays of students' work. The library was an attractive place to work and study independently and in groups. It was well stocked with an impressive array of specialist periodicals.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school's admission policy was inclusive. The wide range of students with SEN demonstrated that the school was very receptive to admitting them and that SEN was very well resourced throughout the school. Although the school made use of the KHDA categories to identify most SEN students, it used different criteria to identify 283 students as gifted and talented. Students were screened on entry and a good tracking system ensured that any deterioration of expected progress was quickly identified. Individual education plans (IEPs) were drawn up with student, teacher and parental input. IEPs were jointly monitored by students, teachers and parents. Teachers modified the curriculum for students with SEN and also linked cross-curricular fields with the students' IEPs. A highly effective support team was in place, with specialist teachers giving in-class support and withdrawing students for short periods. The tracking system was very good. Class teachers and specialist staff closely monitored the progress of students with SEN. Students in all categories of SEN were making good progress across all subjects and, in a few cases, they made outstanding progress.

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

Across the phases the quality of teaching Arabic as a first language was inconsistent. It was developing in the secondary and post-16 phases. Teachers' secure subject knowledge provided students with correctly modelled language and information. The majority of lessons were planned well with clear objectives and steps to follow. In the upper phases, teachers gave sufficient opportunities for students to work independently and with others. They included a variety of activities that integrated the four skills of the language. In the primary phase, however, lessons were more teacher-directed with fewer opportunities for students to use the language interactively. The teachers' use of probing questions in the upper phases generated good discussion amongst students. However, differentiation across all the phases was based mainly on different worksheets that did not cater to different needs. Although the school reviewed the curriculum to suit the needs of the students, many of the lessons lacked appropriate challenge and support. Teachers in the secondary phase were more effective in enriching lessons with a variety of resources. In the primary phase, teachers mainly based their activities on MoE textbooks. Lessons did not always include a good balance between the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

## 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	24%
	Last year	291	46%
Teachers	41		34%
Students	168		60%

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

Only a minority of parents and teachers responded to the surveys. A majority of students responded. Almost all parents said that their children enjoyed school and that there was good quality teaching. Students agreed. Most parent believed that their children made good progress in English, mathematics and science but about a quarter thought progress was unsatisfactory in Arabic as an additional language. Both parents and students thought that the curriculum was wide ranging but only a majority of students thought that their learning about Emirati heritage was sufficient. Students were pleased with the range of extra-curricular activities. The parents and the teachers believed the school to be led well and parents thought that the managers listened to their opinions.



## 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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