

INSPECTION REPORT

Star International School - Mirdif

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Star International School - Mirdif

Location	Mirdif
Type of school	Private
Website	www.starschoolmirdif.com
Telephone	04-2884644
Address	P O Box 51008, Mirdif
Principal	Debbie Trivett
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-11 / Foundation Stage 1-Year 6
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	378
Largest nationality group of Students	UK
Number of Emirati students	45 (12%)
Date of the inspection	14th to 16th January 2014

Contents

The context of the school.....	3
Overall school performance 2013-2014.....	4
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
Progress since the last inspection	5
Trend of overall performance.....	5
How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?	6
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are teaching and assessment?.....	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?	8
How well does the school protect and support students?	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
How well does the school provide for Emirati students?.....	13
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	13
How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?.....	14
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	15
What happens next?	16
How to contact us	16

The context of the school

Star International Private School is located in Mirdif and provides education for girls and boys, aged three to 11 years. The school follows the National Curriculum of England, in addition to Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language and Arabic as an additional language, as prescribed by the Ministry of Education.

At the time of the inspection there were 378 students enrolled, representing 50 nationalities; 12 per cent were Emirati. Enrolment had increased by 37 per cent over the previous year. There were twenty-three students with special educational needs across both phases of the school. Students were grouped into 18 classes: eight Foundation Stage classes, three Year 1 classes, three Year 2 classes, two Year 3 classes and one each in Years 4 to 6.

The school had 31 teaching staff, almost all of whom held appropriate qualifications. Seven nationalities were represented; most of the teachers being British. Eleven teachers were new to the school in the current year. Seventeen teaching assistants supported learning programmes, as well as several learning support assistants. The principal had been in post for over a year.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Good attainment and progress in all subjects in the Foundation Stage;
- Good quality curriculum and teaching in the Foundation Stage;
- Good student behaviour and positive attitudes to learning;
- Positive relationships between school and parents which supported students' learning effectively;
- Premises and facilities which provided a safe, pleasant and stimulating environment, well suited to learning.

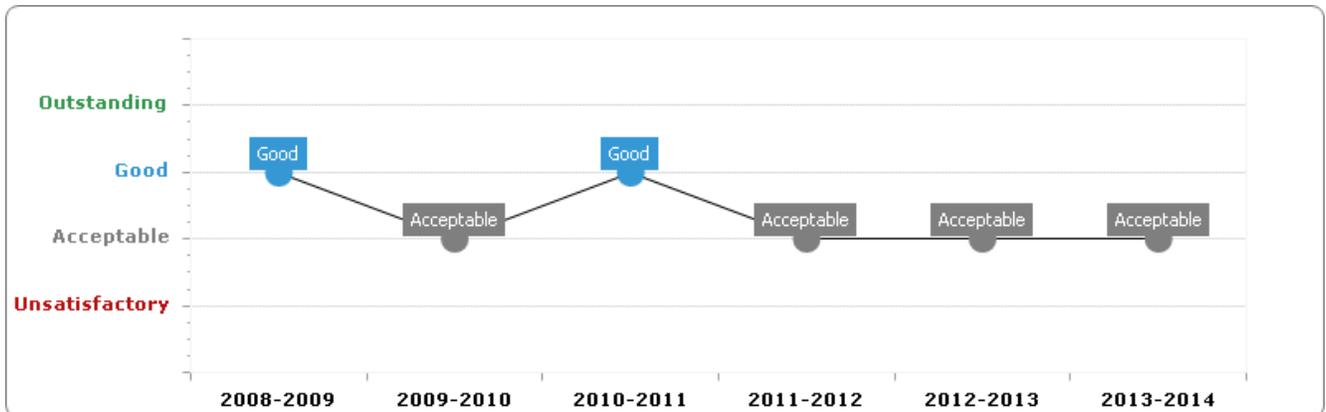
Recommendations

- Leaders should create a professionally supportive community in which all staff can contribute to school improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning skills and assessment in the primary years.
- Improve primary students' progress in all key subjects and attainment in writing and in Arabic as an additional language.
- Implement procedures to ensure the safety of students who enter and exit the school premises through vehicular areas.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school had implemented a comprehensive screening process to help identify and support students with special education needs.
- The school had developed an improved self-study and planning process.
- Improvements in curriculum planning had led to more investigative learning in the Foundation Stage and better transition between year groups
- The school had not significantly improved students' progress in key subjects in primary or attainment in Arabic as an additional language.
- The school had not improved the quality of teaching and learning in the primary phase.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Acceptable	Good	Not Applicable
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the primary phase, except in Arabic as an additional language where it was unsatisfactory. Most students showed an adequate understanding of Islamic concepts and principles. Students could recite short Surahs of the Holy Qur'an although with frequent errors. Students of Arabic as a first language had age-appropriate listening and reading skills. Their speaking and writing skills were less well developed. In Arabic as an additional language, most students' skills in writing words and phrases independently, using them in speech and recognising and responding to familiar language were below the expected levels. In the Foundation Stage, children's listening, speaking and reading skills in English were well developed for their ages. Skills in writing were somewhat weaker. Primary students' listening, speaking and reading skills were broadly as expected for their ages. Writing, including the use of grammar, was comparatively weak. In mathematics, most students could work with numbers and shapes at an age-appropriate level. Attainment in science was better in the Foundation Stage than elsewhere because children learned through investigation.

Progress was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the primary phase. In Islamic Education, most students were progressing satisfactorily in learning the Prophet's Seerah, and their use of basic Tajweed rules was developing. In Arabic as a first language, most students made acceptable progress in grammar skills. Independent writing skills were developing slowly. In Arabic as an additional language, students made adequate progress in learning new vocabulary but made slower progress when teachers spoke in English during lessons. Children developed a love of reading in English in the Foundation Stage. Throughout the school, writing developed the least quickly because of students' insecure grammar and punctuation. In mathematics, Foundation Stage children made good progress in using number. Primary children made acceptable progress overall, for example when interpreting data from charts. Progress in science was good when teachers allowed students to demonstrate their scientific skills through activity-based learning. This was most evident in the Foundation Stage and the lower primary classes.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the primary phase. Students enjoyed learning overall and were enthusiastic and eager. This aspect was strongest in the Foundation Stage where activity-based learning had been developed by teachers. Child-initiated learning in lessons was also a feature and there was evidence of active, inquisitive and independent learners especially in science. In the primary phase, students did what teachers asked of them but this led to passive learning in many cases. Most primary students did not know how to improve on their own learning or collaborate effectively in group

settings. They also needed high levels of support from the teacher when they were given opportunities to link learning to the real world. There was little use of information and communication technology (ICT) during lessons or age-appropriate research opportunities; the lack of these skills was inhibiting maturity and independence of thought. Problem-solving skills were underdeveloped most notably in mathematics.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good. Students were respectful of teachers and of each other. Students readily helped others. The majority of students brought healthy snacks to school. Most enjoyed physical activity in lessons and during breaks. Attendance was at an acceptable level. Most students arrived in good time for lessons and at the start of the day.

Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and good in the primary phase. Students had a clear understanding and appreciated the expectations of an Islamic society and they demonstrated respect through their behaviour. Students in all phases had a basic knowledge of the heritage of UAE that influences life in Dubai. They gave good examples of their own culture and traditions. Students' deeper understanding of local tradition and the heritage of the UAE and other cultures was less developed.

Students' community and environmental responsibility was acceptable throughout the school. School and Eco Council members took their responsibilities, such as organising events and recycling, seriously. They carried them out well. All students took pride in maintaining the school environment. Other opportunities for students to make a sustained contribution to the school and wider community were limited, although a small number participated in a two-day community event. Students developed their enterprise skills through organising an Enterprise Week where substantial funds were raised.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the primary phase. In the Foundation Stage well-planned, lively sessions provided children with frequent opportunities for enquiry and imaginative play. Teachers understood how children learn and classrooms were creatively designed and resourced to stimulate purposeful activity. Teacher-led sessions were closely focused on children's individual needs and interests. The promotion of language development was skilful, with plenty of opportunities for children to interact. A wide range of learning styles was used to allow all children to succeed. In the primary phase, most teachers

had good subject knowledge, but knowledge about how students learn was not as well developed. Lesson plans occasionally included opportunities for students to design activities, assume responsibility for their own learning and develop higher level skills, such as critical thinking. Lessons were frequently well resourced and in many lessons, a range of learning styles was used which provided variety and interest. However, in a small minority of lessons, expectations were too low, especially for the most able students.

Assessment was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the primary phase. In the Foundation Stage, a recently introduced tracking system was used to monitor children's progress through well-planned, formal and informal assessment. This information was used to plan lessons that were well matched to children's needs and interests. Teaching staff knew children well. In primary, there had been some recent improvements, but practice was inconsistent. Teachers were beginning to assess more accurately against level descriptors. This information was used well to identify when interventions were needed. It was not used often enough to plan lessons, so activities occasionally lacked challenge, especially for the more able students. Teachers set individual targets to help students to improve their work, but students sometimes forgot to use them. Opportunities for self-assessment were increasing and marking was detailed and informative. Students often followed up on guidance. Teachers used strategies to judge students' understanding during lessons, but frequently did not change what they did when students did not understand.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum quality was good throughout the school. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage provided well for the needs of early childhood learners. Continuity, progression, integration and coherence were well established. There were many opportunities for exploration, investigation and learning through play. In the primary phase, the curriculum was generally broad and balanced and provided a degree of enrichment beyond the core syllabus. The science curriculum was not yet fully embedded. Cross-curricular links were being introduced but this was not an extensive feature of the curriculum. Opportunities were missed which would have allowed for useful connections between subjects and aspects that would have promoted greater coherence in the curriculum. Students did not have sufficient access to computers to allow them to research and broaden the areas covered within their studies. There were insufficient open-ended and practical experiences to engage students and promote their creativity and independence.

The curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the primary phase. The school had made some attempts to modify its curriculum for most students but it still did not fully meet the needs of those with special educational needs or the more gifted

and able. In the Foundation Stage, children benefited from open-ended and practical experiences across subjects but there was insufficient scope to engage students fully and promote their creativity and independence in the primary stage. Overall, provision for enrichment of the curriculum was too limited. Students throughout the school did not have enough opportunities to develop their skills in ICT.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school had acceptable health and safety arrangements. The supervision of students within the school building had created a secure learning environment. School transport was efficient; however, the car park was poorly supervised and was a very dangerous area for children to both enter and exit the school. The swimming pool and sports hall were functional and well maintained. Records were kept of regular fire drills, evacuation procedures and other incidents. Healthy living was positively promoted and facilitated by a committed medical team. Foundation Stage children took part in a daily Wake-up Shake-up physical activity session. Child protection procedures were in place and induction provided to new staff on the care and welfare of all children.

The quality of support was acceptable in both phases. Relationships between teachers and children were positive and respectful; teachers had a consistent approach to managing behaviour. However, parents, teachers and school leaders were not sufficiently pro-active in managing the attendance and punctuality of students. The school was inclusive in its admission of students with special educational needs and the identification process and level of support had improved. As part of individual education planning, teachers had compiled a pen-portrait of students which outlined their specific needs and enabled teachers to offer targeted support. Students made acceptable progress but the monitoring of that progress was not systematic.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership of the school was acceptable. Recent staffing changes had led to restructured leadership teams, which were developing the capacity for effective improvement action. Senior leaders were committed to improvement. They had established focused practices of identification and support for special needs students. The school was implementing a teacher induction programme and a revised professional development programme.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Self-evaluation processes included reviews of progress and attainment, and had resulted in action plans focused on key priorities. However, the plans did not sufficiently identify specific teaching skills to be developed or consequently provide for related professional development for primary teachers.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents appreciated ready access to teachers and leaders. Termly reports on students' progress were thorough and teachers frequently gave informal updates. The school did not formally solicit feedback from parents regarding school plans. The school had useful links with local community organisations.

Governance of the school was acceptable. The governing board had been enlarged but still lacked teacher and parent representatives. The governors had begun to increase their overview of the school and provide guidance. They had initiated a programme to improve communication among stakeholders and stabilise staffing and leadership throughout the school.

The management, facilities, and resources were good. The school's daily activities ran smoothly. A sufficient number of qualified teachers and support staff were well deployed. The premises and facilities, including a science laboratory, library, play areas and resource spaces, were attractive and supported learning activities. The computer laboratory and classroom ICT resources were underused.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

In most of the lessons, Emirati students demonstrated attainment and progress comparable to other students in most subjects. The school tracked Emirati students and recorded their achievement in detail in each class. This information included key priorities and the nature of the support provided to the students.

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

The progress of students with special educational needs was acceptable. There was a good system for the identification of students. However, the total number identified across the school was low in relation to the total number of students in the school. The special education needs co-ordinator worked closely with class teachers to identify students who required additional support. Students' special needs covered a range of conditions, such as medical, behavioural, emotional and learning issues. The process of identification was thorough. Where parents agreed and supported the school in any diagnosis, they were fully informed and

involved in the process of producing an appropriate support programme. The quality of provision in lessons was acceptable. Teachers were generally well aware of the needs of those identified and had access to well-designed and comprehensive individual education plans. The school was in the early stages of modifying the curriculum to meet the needs of the students. Good support was often provided by teachers and learning support assistants. The school had invested in a range of resources specifically to meet the needs of students with special educational needs. The school had begun to monitor and track the progress of the students but this was not yet fully effective.

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

The teaching of Arabic as a first language was adequate across the school. Teachers had sufficient subject knowledge, but not all knew how to teach Arabic effectively. Lesson plans were detailed with clear objectives although these were not consistently shared with students. In most lessons, teachers talked excessively and provided too few opportunities for students to practise the language. Teachers made adequate use of resources beyond textbooks such as ICT and flash cards. There were a few opportunities for students to work with others in pairs or in groups. Teachers often set low expectations for their students and their questions during lessons usually required simple, brief answers only. In a few instances, teachers used differentiated work to meet the needs of students at various levels. The school's curriculum was based on the Ministry of Education curriculum standards. It was reviewed each year but the process did not lead to sufficient modifications to help meet the different needs of students. Cross-curricular links were few. The school implemented a few extra activities to support students' knowledge and awareness.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents and teachers 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	99	36%
	Last year	94	47%
Teachers	9		29%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

The survey indicated that most parents were satisfied with the quality of education at the school. English and mathematics were considered to be the most effective of the key subjects, while Arabic caused the most concern. Most parents believed that the school offered a wide range of subjects and activities to choose from. Parents were satisfied that their children were safe at school. The quality of reporting by teachers on students' progress was rated highly.

Students were not of an age to complete the survey.

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

Copyright © 2014

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school.
It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.