

# INSPECTION REPORT

## International School of Arts and Sciences

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT International School of Arts and Sciences

Location	Al Warqaa
Type of school	Private
Website	www.isas.sch.ae
Telephone	04-2800459
Address	PO Box 35901, Dubai
Principal	Muhieddine Soubra
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	3-18 / Kindergarten to 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	589
Number of Emirati students	213 (36%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 28th to Wednesday 30th November 2011

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## The context of the school

Located in Al Warqaa, International School of Arts and Sciences is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to high, aged three to eighteen years. The school follows a US curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 589 students on the roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

There were 55 full and part-time teachers, including the Principal and senior leadership team. All teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. They were supported by a number of teaching and classroom assistants. About 36 per cent of students were Emirati. Forty five different nationalities were represented among the student population.

At the time of the inspection, the Principal was in his fifth year. Approximately 22 teachers had been in the school for less than one year. Approximately 44 per cent of the students had joined the school during the current semester.

## Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

## How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The overall performance at The International School of Arts and Sciences was acceptable. It had a number of noteworthy features. There was a very strong ethos based on the school core set of values. Students and teachers worked well together. The students had good overall attitudes and behaviour. Teaching was good in the Kindergarten and elementary stages and acceptable in the middle and higher stages of the school. Attainment and progress were at least acceptable across most subject areas. It was good in English at all stages and in Arabic as an additional language and science at the elementary stages and mathematics at the higher stages. The school was non-compliant in Islamic Education. Insufficient time was allocated to the teaching of Islamic Education in Grades 1 to 3. The school facilities and resources were outstanding.

The school had made good progress towards addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report. It had developed written policies and procedures for all phases for student academic and social growth. It had begun to make more effective use of assessment data to improve teaching and

learning. On-going staff development and training had helped improve teaching approaches to align tasks and activities to better meet the varying needs of all students. School leaders displayed a good capacity to improve and were dedicated to the school's ongoing improvement journey.

## Key strengths

- Well behaved students and their positive relationships with their teachers;
- Outstanding provision for health and safety and the quality of the facilities, equipment and resources;
- The vision and commitment of the Principal and his senior team;
- The enthusiasm shown by staff and their willingness to embrace change.

## Recommendations

- Ensure that Islamic Education in Grades 1 to 3 meets statutory requirements of the Ministry of Education;
- Continue to implement strategies to improve teaching, learning, attainment and progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies;
- Make more effective use of assessment information to plan learning tasks that are appropriately challenging for all ability levels;
- Work closely with parents to improve punctuality at the start of the day.

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

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

Attainment was acceptable at all stages in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language. It was acceptable in mathematics at the elementary and middle stages, and in Arabic as a first language and science at the middle and higher stages. Attainment was good at all stages in English and in Arabic as a first language at the elementary stage. It was good in mathematics at the Kindergarten and higher stages and in science at the Kindergarten and elementary stages. In Islamic Education, most students in the lower

grades were able to name the Pillars of Islam and the five daily prayers. In the higher grades students knew the difference between prophets and messengers. In Arabic as a first language, students in the elementary stage were able to read extended texts in their books and answer comprehension questions. In Arabic as an additional language, students' oral reading skills were slightly above expectations. Attainment in all grades was above expectations for learners of English as an additional language. The majority of students demonstrated effective reading, speaking and listening skills. Writing was the main area of weakness across all grades. In mathematics, in the middle school and upper elementary levels, students confidently added and subtracted fractions and at the lower elementary level they were studying equivalence. In sciences, a minority of students displayed appropriate investigative skills whilst most were able to follow laboratory procedures as set out by the teacher.

Progress ranged from acceptable to good across all subjects and stages in the school. It was good in the Kindergarten in English, mathematics and science and in Arabic as an additional language, English and science in the elementary classes. It was good in the middle and higher stages in English and acceptable in all other subject areas with the exception of mathematics in the higher stages. Progress for students with special educational needs was acceptable throughout the school.

Emirati students overall attainment and progress across all key subjects was in line with that of other students at all phases in the school.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

Most students exhibited good behaviour in lessons and around the school. They were respectful of each other, their teachers and cordial to visitors. They mostly demonstrated positive attitudes towards learning. In the middle and high school sections, however, a few older boys did not exhibit positive attitudes to learning and this was manifested in their approach to lessons, their interactions with peers and their reactions to their teachers. Students had an acceptable awareness of what constituted healthy living but that was mainly limited to choice of food. Attendance was generally good but punctuality, especially at the beginning of the school day, remained an issue throughout the school. Children in the Kindergarten had age-appropriate knowledge of Islamic symbols and could give examples about life in Dubai. All students in the high school exhibited a good understanding of the impact of Islam on their lives in Dubai. They were very proud of their own cultures while deeply appreciating the multi-cultural nature of their school and also of Dubai. Students in the elementary and middle school sections were less secure in this knowledge. Students in the upper grades had a good knowledge about Dubai's economic growth and the development of the different emirates within the UAE. Most students, across the upper school, had a better awareness and understanding of local and global environmental issues. However, they did not often participate in activities to sustain the environment. An active and involved students' council helped promote students' understanding of citizenship in the life of the school and beyond. This however, was having its greatest impact on students in the high school.



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

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

Teaching was good in Kindergarten and elementary and acceptable in the middle and high school stages. Most teachers were well organized and taught to clearly define objectives for their students. Question and answer techniques were used effectively to increase student comprehension and interest but in some cases more emphasis on higher level reasoning was required. Teachers used a variety of techniques in most lessons, which motivated and interested students. In a few lessons, the pace was too slow and not all students were challenged sufficiently to reach their full potential. There was some degree of information and communications technology (ICT) use in most lessons, but full integration of subject and ICT outcomes were rare.

Learning was good at the Kindergarten and elementary stages and acceptable in middle and high. Students were co-operative learners and the majority of students were engaged in their lessons and school activities. Most students worked effectively and in groups and independently. Most were able to apply concepts to real-life situations. While they were successful in completing routine activities assigned by the teacher, a majority of students could not initiate and complete an investigation or extended study.

Assessment was acceptable at all stages. The school had implemented advice given during the previous inspection and this was beginning to impact throughout the school. Staff were beginning to gather assessment information in a systematic manner and were using the information gained to improve teaching and learning. Data review teams had been established and had begun to meet on a regular basis to review data gained. This was also used to help in curriculum planning. Students were being prepared for appropriate external examinations for the school to set achievement and progress benchmarks. Formative assessment approaches were used in many classes through active teacher questioning as well as

independent and collaborative activities. In a number of classes where learning objectives were not set out clearly, students did not receive clear or sufficient feedback about their work to allow them to improve sufficiently.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good

The curriculum was good in all phases of the school. It was broad and balanced and was the result of a rationale that matched the school's aims of preparing confident, well-rounded young people. There was a well-developed and comprehensive quarterly review process, which successfully involved all stakeholders. Continuity and progression, from Kindergarten to Grade 12 was effective. Programmes were well planned to ensure a smooth transition between all phases. There was considerable scope to improve cross-curricular planning. Although independent learning, research and critical thinking opportunities were evident in the secondary section, this was less evident in the rest of the school. The school did not meet the statutory time requirements for Islamic Education for Grades 1 to 3. There was a wide and varied range of curricular enrichment activities available within the school day. In addition, the school offered a good range of after-school clubs.

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

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

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were outstanding. All staff took their duty of care seriously. All children felt safe and secure. Clear expectations and very well established routines throughout the day and on the buses ensured the safety of students and staff. Arrangements for the well being of the students were effectively monitored by the medical staff. Medicines and students' personal records were kept securely. Teaching staff were fully aware of any special medical needs of particular students. Fire drills were carried out at appropriate intervals. Healthy living was promoted through a series of initiatives across the school. In response to requests from parents, the range of healthy food choices

available to students in the school canteen had been increased. All staff and students were fully aware of the school's arrangements for child protection.

The quality of support for students was good. Relationships between staff and students were respectful and productive. Behaviour was of a high standard and was well managed. Students' well-being and personal circumstances were closely monitored and they received high quality individual guidance and support. Guidance on future education for older students was comprehensive and covered a wide range of options. Whilst most students with special educational needs received effective support, there was some inconsistency in the quality of in-class support provided for these students. Parents were actively encouraged to be involved in the life of the school and their children's education. Support for attendance was good and almost all students attended school regularly. The checking of attendance was effective. However, systems to support punctuality at the start of the day had yet to have a positive impact.

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

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

The school leadership was good overall. The Principal had good leadership skills and communicated a vision that was clear and supported by all staff. The senior leadership team and heads of department displayed high levels of dedication, professionalism and knew the work of the school well. They were well respected by teachers, parents and students. Working together, the management team had succeeded in having a positive effect on the quality of assessment and curriculum planning. The school demonstrated a capacity to improve further.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The senior management team's systematic self-evaluation progresses were firmly embedded in school improvement planning. The school knew itself well at all levels and most key priorities were clearly identified. Teachers' classroom practice was regularly evaluated and they benefited from a good professional development programme. Improvement plans

were positive and achievable. The school had made good overall progress towards addressing the recommendations from last year's report.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. There were effective levels of communication with parents who reported that they were kept very well informed about their student's progress through written correspondence, the website and regularly scheduled parent meetings. Communication was not limited to academic performance but covered all aspects of the student's development. Parents had a range of opportunities to become involved in the life of the school, through, for example, a Parent Involvement Week and issue-specific meetings. A minority of parents indicated they would prefer some of the enhancement activities for younger students to take place within the school day.

The quality of governance was acceptable. The governing body benefited from parental representation. The school's senior leadership was accountable and the governing body had monitored the school's response to the recommendations from the last inspection. However, it had not ensured that the school was meeting statutory requirements for Islamic Education in Grades 1 to 3. A wider stakeholder involvement in the school had been encouraged through parental surveys. There was limited formal involvement of community and business leaders. The school had made constructive responses to suggestions from the governing body, such as increasing the number of SAT study periods and reviewing the catering arrangements.

Staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding overall. Although staff turnover was high, induction arrangements ensured there was minimum disruption to continuity in learning. Staff were appropriately qualified. The school campus was very well maintained by all and the day-to-day management of the school was highly efficient. Learning resources were extensive and of a high quality.

## 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	71	19%
	Last year	97	36%
Teachers	51		93%
Students	72		53%

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

A small minority of parents responded to the survey, fewer than last year's response. Almost all teachers and about half of the senior students responded to their surveys. Most parents and senior students were satisfied with the quality of education available at the school, a view supported by the teachers. Most parents believed that their children were making good progress in English, mathematics and science. A majority believed that progress was good in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first or additional language. Parents held broadly positive views about provision by the school across the range of aspects. About half the parents indicated that they were involved in school improvement; fewer senior students indicated that they were involved. Majorities of parents and teachers believed that inspection had led to improvements at the school, but about a third of each indicated that they did not know. A majority of students indicated that behaviour at the school was good, but a few disagreed with them. More than a few students reported that the progress reports they received were not useful enough.

## 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)

## Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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