

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Salam Private School

Report published in April, 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Salam Private School

Location	Al Nahda
Type of school	Private
Website	www.alsalamschool.sch.ae
Telephone	04-2679594
Address	Al Qusais Al Nahda 2P.O. BOX 5251
Principal	Susan Patricia Johnston
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18, Foundation Stage 1 to Year 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1158
Largest nationality group of Students	Arab Nations
Number of Emirati students	240
Date of the inspection	11th November to 14th November 2013

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The context of the school

Al Salam School, which is situated in Al Nahda, had 1,158 boys and girls aged between three and 18 years on the roll at the time of the inspection. Around half of the students were Emirati (21 percent) or other Arab Nationals (28 percent). The next biggest nationality grouping was Pakistani, around 30 percent, and the remainder of the students came from a large number of other national backgrounds. The school curriculum was broadly based on the English National Curriculum from Kindergarten, which followed the Early Years Foundation Stage, to secondary and post-16 stages, where students took International GCSE and A/S level examinations respectively. The school was accredited by Cambridge International and followed the CIPP and CIE programmes. At the time of the inspection, there were 88 teachers in the school, 69 of whom had a teaching qualification, and a further 13 academic staff with senior leadership responsibilities. Teachers were supported by 25 teaching assistants. Staff turnover was low. The Principal had developed and led the school for the 25 years since it opened.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- The school's successful approach to developing attainment in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language, and Arabic as an additional language;
- Outstanding attainment and progress in English at the secondary and post-16 stages, and in mathematics at the post-16 stage;
- Students' positive attitudes, behaviour, cultural awareness and understanding of Islamic values, particularly at the secondary and post-16 stages;
- The very effective arrangements for health and safety, and the high quality support for students, including those with special educational needs;
- The school's approach to planning and implementing improvements, under the inclusive and dedicated leadership of the Principal and with good support from other leaders.

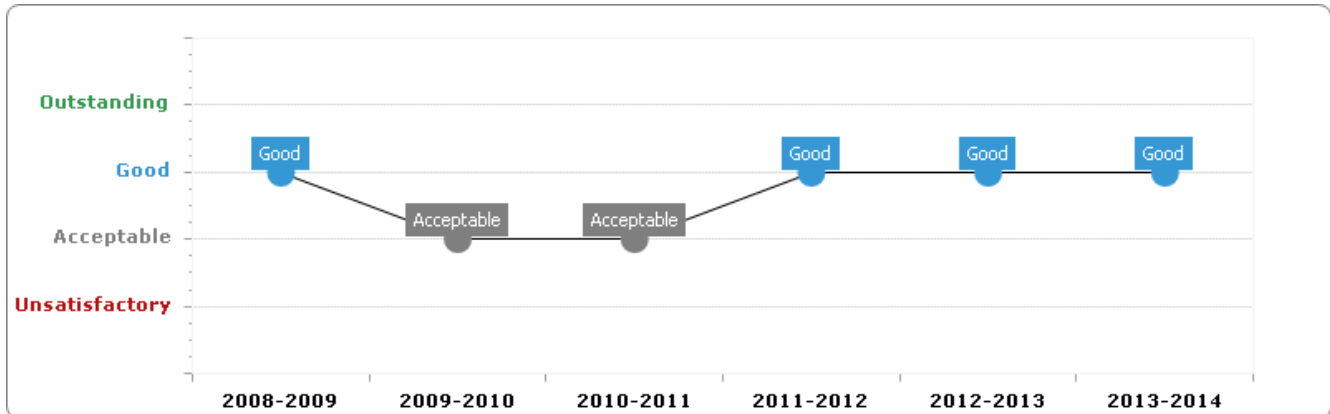
Recommendations

- Improve the quality of learning by providing more opportunities for Foundation Stage children and students at other stages, particularly primary, to take responsibility for their learning by working together, investigating, researching and using technology where appropriate;
- Ensure more consistency in the quality of teaching, by building on and spreading the best practice which already exists, and by customising lesson plans to meet the needs of different groups of students in each class;
- Continue to improve assessment, particularly at Foundation Stage, to help teachers meet the needs of different groups of students, and to contribute to monitoring and review of the curriculum and the overall work of the school.

Progress since the last inspection

- Staff had been successful in improving attainment in English at the Foundation Stage and in mathematics at Foundation and primary stages. In addition, attainment and progress in English at the secondary and post-16 stages and in mathematics at the post-16 stage was now better than before. Students' progress in Arabic as a first language at Secondary had also improved.
- Staff had worked to match teaching to the individual learning needs of all students in the class. While some improvements had been made, they had not been sufficient to change the overall quality of this aspect of lessons.
- Staff had implemented improvements in some aspects of assessment. Assessment at the primary stage had improved and was now good.
- Staff had successfully modified the curriculum, which was now compliant with MoE requirements for Arabic teaching time in Years 1 to 3 and Years 9 to 11.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	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	Good	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Good	Good	Good

[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	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was good in most key subjects and phases, acceptable in science in the foundation stage, and outstanding in a few others. In Islamic Education, most students demonstrated good knowledge of Islamic concepts. Skills in recitation and memorisation of the Holy Qur'an were acceptable. In Arabic as a first language, most students had good listening, speaking and reading skills. Their writing skills were acceptable. In Arabic as an additional language, the four main language skills were well developed, particularly in the secondary stage. In English, a focus on child-centred outcomes had led to good attainment in the Foundation Stage. In the primary stage, the time given to students in lessons to complete written work was not always sufficient. In the secondary and post-16 stages, students showed high levels of attainment, for example in analysing plays by Shakespeare. Examination results were outstanding. In mathematics, Foundation Stage children were able to apply skills in practical activities. Those in the primary stage had good knowledge, for example of the metric system. Examination results in IGCSE and at AS level confirmed good and outstanding attainment in the secondary and post-16 stages respectively. In science, children at the Foundation Stage were gaining knowledge of the world around them. In the primary stage, they had knowledge about living organisms, atoms, and the effects of scientific developments on the environment. Science investigation and practical skills were good in the senior stages.

The pattern of progress in subjects was almost identical to that in attainment. In Islamic Education, most students made good progress in understanding Islamic concepts. Most were able to develop appropriate links with their daily lives. Children started to learn Arabic as a first language in the Foundation Stage, and this helped their subsequent progress. Progress at other stages was better in knowledge than in critical thinking. In Arabic as additional language, most students in the primary stage made progress in line with expectations for that stage. Most students in Secondary made steady progress in learning new vocabulary and using what they learned to express ideas. In English, in the Foundation and primary stages, children were enthusiastic learners and made good progress in listening and responding. In Secondary and Post-16, critical thinking skills developed well, and progress in reading and use of language was outstanding. Students were gaining competence in applying their mathematical skills in unfamiliar learning contexts. Practical activities were helping them to develop logical thinking skills. Progress in science was enhanced by collaborative working. Teachers' questioning helped students to make progress, particularly in the secondary and post 16 stages.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The learning skills of Foundation Stage children and students in the primary stage were acceptable. In most lessons, teachers shared the intended learning outcomes, and this helped students to be engaged and take responsibility for their own learning. They were becoming more aware of their strengths and weaknesses through the developing use of peer assessment. Their abilities to make connections between areas of learning and with the world beyond school were developing well. Overall though, students showed a limited range of learning skills, often because the teaching methods did not provide enough opportunities for them to practise these skills. When given opportunities for collaborative group work, students were enthusiastic but often did not listen to each other's contributions. Students' learning skills were good in the secondary and post 16 stages. Students took responsibility for learning outside the classroom, for example at home using interactive learning technology and other IT software to make presentations to their classmates.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Personal responsibility was good in the foundation and primary stages, and outstanding at the other stages. Students lived up to the school's aim of being a caring and tolerant community. They showed positive attitudes towards others, for example when students from special needs centres visited to take part in break-time activities. Behaviour in lessons was positive, particularly when learning activities engaged their attention. Students responded well to the systematic way in which the school encouraged them to have a healthy lifestyle. Attendance was good overall, but only acceptable in some years. A small minority of students arrived late for the start of the school day. The students' appreciation of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness was outstanding. The school's ethos and its promotion of moral principles ensured that all students had an excellent understanding of Islamic values and their application to life in Dubai. They understood the history of UAE and could explain the effects of development on traditional lifestyles. Throughout the year, students participated in national and international celebrations and showed respect for other cultures. Older students in particular had an understanding of issues facing developing countries. Community and environmental responsibility was good. A democratically elected students' council enabled participation in a wide range of school and community activities. Positive work ethic and enterprise was evident, for example when students displayed good skills in mediating minor conflicts between their peers, or running the Debating Club for students.

Environmental awards over the past few years and a wide and varied display of students' work effectively created awareness of a range of local and world issues including the environment. School facilities for recycling were underused by students.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was good. Teachers had secure subject knowledge. They planned lessons well. In the best practice there was effective planning of tasks to meet the needs of different groups of students, but this aspect was variable across subjects and phases. Also in the best practice, teachers highlighted links between different subjects and gave examples of practical applications. There was evidence of effective target setting for students but this was not always evident in formal lesson plans. In the best lessons a wide range of resources, including interactive whiteboards, was used. On the whole, teachers used questioning well. In many lessons, particularly at the primary stage, there was too much didactic teaching and not enough active participation by students, for example in group discussion. Children at the Foundation Stage had too few opportunities to explore on their own, with adult guidance.

The quality of assessment was acceptable in Foundation Stage and good at other stages. Assessment data was accurate. The use of data to monitor students' progress and support attainment was effective, especially in upper primary, secondary and post-16 phases. Improvement in this aspect was evident in Foundation Stage but it was not yet fully implemented because the Early Years Foundation Stage profile had only recently been introduced. Staff recorded and tracked the progress of individuals and groups over time and paid attention to different groups of students including girls, boys, Emirati students and those with special educational needs (SEN). The way in which staff analysed students' attainment and compared it with international standards was improving. Best practice was evident when teachers' comments and marking of students' work provided guidance for improvement alongside self and peer assessment. The use of predicted grades for external exams was effective as a motivator for success.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum met the needs of different groups of students well. The school had adopted a published curriculum across the primary, secondary and post-16 phases. With regular monitoring, this scheme ensured progression, continuity and coverage of the necessary content. In Kindergarten, the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum had only recently been introduced to facilitate more accurate benchmarking of children's progress towards international standards. Appropriate adjustments were made

to the curriculum to adapt it to the local context. The range of curriculum subjects provided suitable opportunities for students across the school to follow their aspirations. New teaching staff benefited from workshops on the curriculum to gain an insight into how it should be delivered in practice. Staff were increasingly providing opportunities for investigative activities, particularly in mathematics and science. The use of information technology such as tablet computers by students was under-developed.

The design of the curriculum was good across all phases of the school. The staff had adjusted the curriculum to provide tasks that were closely matched to students' different abilities, including those with special educational needs. Extension of the curriculum to provide additional challenge was limited. Extra-curricular clubs, especially in sporting activities, increased the choice in the curriculum for students and permitted further opportunities for students to pursue their interests and develop specific talents. Additional revision and support classes were available to students at weekends and outside of formal school day.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The quality of the school's health and safety systems was outstanding at all stages. Staff were highly committed to promoting students' health and safety. The campus was secure and well maintained. The flow of buses and other traffic was controlled and supervised well. Medical staff provided highly effective support in promoting and monitoring students' health and welfare. Staff kept appropriate records of the health and development of individual students. Staff and students were aware of the procedures to follow if they had a concern for a student's wellbeing.

The quality of support was outstanding across all stages. Staff and students shared warm relationships. Teachers knew their students very well and were fully aware of their needs. The management of attendance and punctuality required greater attention from all staff. Children with special educational needs were identified through class observations, formal and informal assessments and feedback from parents and teachers. The committed team of educators and counsellors supported all students with special educational needs. Workshops were provided on an on-going basis to staff and parents to increase awareness and to identify the skills required for effective support. The team had developed comprehensive individual education plans and progress was good for students in the key subjects. Children in Foundation Stage were supported through their teachers and parents, while older students could approach the school counsellors directly for assistance in dealing with any personal issues.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

All five key aspects of leadership and management were of good quality. The Principal gave strong leadership to staff. She showed drive and determination in encouraging the development of students' academic, personal and social skills to the fullest. She was supported well by other staff with leadership responsibilities and they had a good impact on the work of the school. The school's capacity to improve and innovate was developing well.

The Principal and senior managers used a wide range of approaches to monitoring and evaluating the quality of the school's work. As a result, they had a good knowledge of the strengths and areas in need of improvement. All staff were involved in reviewing the curriculum and other key aspects. Senior staff were working to improve the procedures for monitoring the quality of lessons and integrate them into a performance appraisal scheme for staff. The process of planning and implementing improvements in the school's work was having an increasingly positive impact.

Parents appreciated the frequent and helpful communications from the school, including information on their children's progress. They had opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school. Links with the local community and other schools enhanced the curriculum. The Principal operated a good 'open door' policy for individual parents but there was no formal group in which parents could make their voice heard.

The board of governors included a wide range of business and community representatives. With their diverse backgrounds and broad expertise, for example in financial matters, they were able to offer helpful advice and support and exerted a positive influence on the school. The governors were well placed to support the school's efforts to strengthen further the partnership with parents from all backgrounds.

Staff managed daily routines well. Most teachers were suitably qualified and able to use modern teaching methods. They benefited from additional in-service training. Staffing levels had been boosted by the appointment of SEN specialists. Staff turnover was low. Teaching assistants gave good support. Specialist areas for art, music, drama, science, computers and physical education enhanced the facilities. Some areas were rather cramped, and the school was seeking solutions. Resources were in good supply. IT resources to support student-centred research and investigation were limited. Staff were learning how to use recently introduced interactive white boards to improve the quality of teaching.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The attainment and progress of Emirati students was good in the key subjects. The number of Emirati students at post-16 phase was fewer than five, and so this report does not comment on progress and attainment in that phase. Emirati children in Foundation Stage had lower starting points in English than their peers. This initially affected their progress in other subjects, but they tended to catch up as their English language skills developed. For example, in English, Emirati students in the primary phase had excellent reading habits from a range of genres and enjoyed discussing what they had read. They used this knowledge in their discussions, analysis and writing. Emirati students performed better in English in Year 10 when compared to Years 7 to 9 as a result of opting for English as an Additional Language. In mathematics, over the previous five years, almost all Emirati students had attained grade B or better passes in IGCSE examinations, by the end of the secondary stage. Attainment in science was in line with that of their peers. Emirati students were well integrated into the life of the school. They participated well in debates, sports and community and environmental activities. The school made effective provision for their cultural heritage. The school taught Islamic Education and Arabic from Foundation Stage onwards, and this helped students to attain at a high level in those subjects. Leaders attended well to the needs of Emirati students, and were working to improve the involvement of parents.

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

The school had an inclusive admissions policy and welcomed and celebrated diversity. The only barriers to admission were the school's lack of expertise to support more complex SEN cases, and insufficient space to accommodate additional students with SEN. The principal's vision of a caring, supportive school was firmly grounded, and a number of SEN staff were employed. At Foundation Stage, new children enrolling were often identified by parents, who regularly provided professional assessment information for the enrolment interview. Baseline testing occurred to differentiate those who had a specific learning disability. The school was becoming increasingly adept at analysing this information and utilising it to improve the learning of its students with SEN. Counsellors observed and shadowed students identified as possibly needing additional learning support. Withdrawal for one-to-one teaching with SEN personnel was a regular and successful feature. Progress was demonstrated during classroom observations and a secure picture was evident in all key subjects across all stages. Gifted and talented students were supported to achieve the highest possible standards. Workshops were provided by the SEN team on an on-going basis to staff and parents to increase awareness and knowledge and skills required for effective support. The needs of most students in all phases

were met to at least a good level. However, tracking levels of achievement over time required improvement. There was a growing awareness of the need to modify programmes to meet specific learning needs.

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

The school complied with MoE requirements for Arabic teaching time and was keen to support the Arabic curriculum, for example by teaching Arabic in the Foundation Stage. The curriculum there was designed to facilitate children's transition to the MoE curriculum used in the primary and other stages. Children learned with activities and through games, and application of ICT gave the children the freedom to express their ideas and link what they learned with real life. The school provided appropriate resources to support the curriculum. Most lessons in all stages included ICT presentations to enrich the content of the lesson. Occasionally there was some differentiation of tasks for different groups of students. Cross-curricular links existed but were not always well planned. Opportunities for independent learning and critical thinking were inconsistent features of the planned curriculum. Almost all teachers set clear learning objectives. They planned well and were enthusiastic in their explanations. Expectations of students' progress were suitable. Most teachers had appropriate qualifications. Most teachers provided opportunities for collaborative learning but at times these were ineffective. All teachers used ICT presentations, internet, and appropriate videos. There were insufficient opportunities for students to develop their writing skills.

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	187	27%
	Last year	102	15%
Teachers	50		47%
Students	66		89%

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

Around one-quarter of parents responded to the questionnaire, an increase on the previous year's return rate. Around one-third of teachers and senior students responded. Almost all parents, teachers and students who responded had positive views about the overall quality of education. Parents' views on their children's progress in key subjects were positive, particularly in mathematics but slightly less so in Arabic as a first language. Almost all parents thought that their children enjoyed school, and were safe and well looked after. Most thought that the school dealt well with cases of bullying. Almost all parents and teachers said that the school was well led. Less than half were aware of the school's performance in international surveys of attainment. All staff who responded, most parents, and a majority of students considered that leaders listened to their views. Teachers felt involved in review and improvement activities. They were positive about the support they received for developing as teachers and for helping students with SEN. A majority of teachers thought that leaders discussed with them the school's results of international surveys of attainment. All students who responded felt safe in the school but, on the whole, their views were less positive than those of parents or teachers; for example, less than half were satisfied with the range of extra-curricular activities.

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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