

INSPECTION REPORT

Cambridge International School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Cambridge International School

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemscis-dubai.com
Telephone	04-2824646
Address	P.O. Box 60835, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Principal	Craig Dennis Lamshed
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / FS1-Year 13
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	2569
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	43 (1.67%)
Date of the inspection	21st October to 24th October

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The context of the school

Cambridge International School is a private school located in Al Gharhoud. It had a roll of 2569 students aged three to 18 years, just over 200 more students than the last academic year. Nearly half of all students were in the primary phase. The school follows the National Curriculum for England, from the Foundation Stage through the primary and secondary phases to the post-16 phase. Students are entered for International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and/or GCSE at the end of the secondary phase and GCE Advanced Level (AL) examinations at the end of the post-16 phase. The school offered the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) vocational qualification in a range of subjects. There were 137 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 16 teaching assistants and 48 learning support assistants. The Principal was in his first year in post, his second year at the school. Twenty-three teachers were newly appointed during 2013. Students were grouped in 88 classes. Forty-three students (approximately 1.7 per cent) were Emirati. Over 70 different nationalities were represented among the student population; just over a third of students had an Indian heritage. Approximately five per cent of students had been identified by the school as having some form of additional educational need. These students received learning support in withdrawal sessions with specialist staff and during normal lessons.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- Good or better attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science in all phases;
- After school activities enriching the curriculum provision;
- Inclusivity at the heart of the whole school ethos;
- Students' excellent behaviour and relationships with adults and peers;
- The commitment of the leaders to fulfil the school's vision and respond to the aspirations of the students and parents.

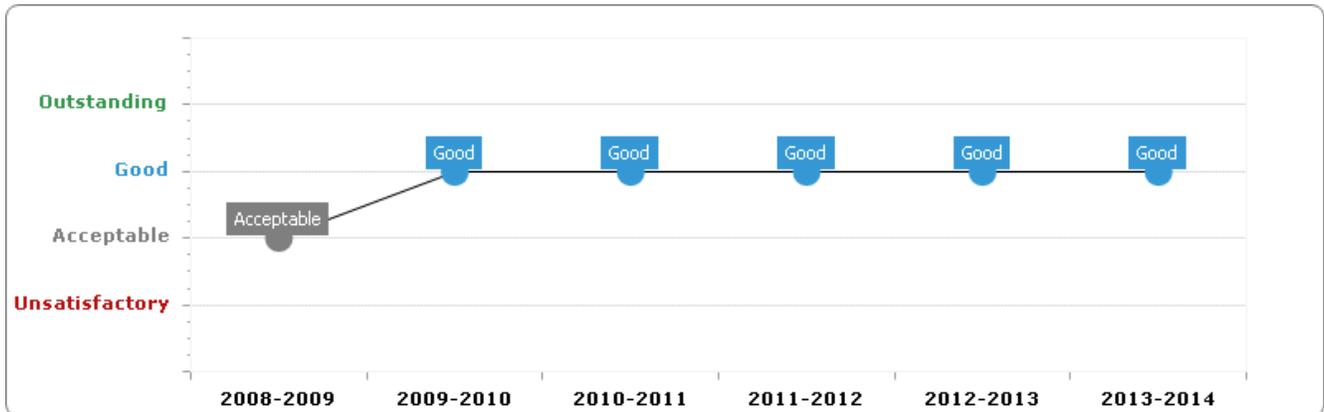
Recommendations

- Improve students' progress in Arabic;
- Further improve the consistency of good quality teaching in the primary phase;
- Make better use of assessment data across all phases to inform teaching and curriculum planning , for example targeted in-class support;
- Ensure consistent implementation of arrangements to meet the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs.

Progress since the last inspection

- Improved teaching styles in the primary phase had led to improved learning skills;
- Student involvement (particularly Emirati students) in better community activities;
- A wider range of leadership opportunities for students;
- Student involvement in evaluating the quality of provision;
- Further improvements in the school's partnership with parents.

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	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	Good	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	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable. Students in the lower primary grades had appropriate understanding of key concepts such as the oneness of Allah and His attributes. By the end of primary, most students showed understanding of the importance of respecting Islamic values such as honouring and obeying parents. Students in upper grades recalled important Islamic principles, explained meanings from familiar verses from Qur'an and Hadeeth and showed acceptable recitation skills. Good listening and speaking skills in Arabic as a First Language were demonstrated by a majority of students in Primary who could communicate their ideas clearly. Across the school, reading and writing were at an acceptable level. In Arabic as an Additional Language, most students were able to use familiar phrases with an appropriate amount of words and could say few simple sentence about themselves, reflecting acceptable speaking skills. Reading and writing skills were less developed. In English, students' attainment was good in the Foundation Stage and the primary phase and outstanding in the secondary phase and the post-16 phase, where high standards in English literature were particularly noteworthy. Throughout the school, students generally had very good listening skills but presentation in writing was generally under developed. Attainment in mathematics and science was good across all the phases. A significant number of students at the end of each transition stage were performing above international expectations. In science in Kindergarten, children could observe, question and answer questions, for example 'how are shadows formed?' In Primary and lower Secondary, students had developed an understanding of scientific method and a wide knowledge of scientific topics.

Students made good progress in Islamic Education; for example, they enhanced their knowledge of the forms of worship in Islam such as prayers and Zakah. In Arabic as a First Language, a majority of students made steady progress improving their knowledge and understanding of grammar skills, particularly in the primary phase. Progress in reading skills and writing at length was slower for students in secondary and post-16. Across the school, most students of Arabic as an additional language made acceptable progress developing their listening and speaking skills but progress in reading and writing was limited. English progress was outstanding in Foundation Stage, Secondary and Post-16. In the post-16 phase, progress in written expression was excellent. Progress in mathematics was good across all phases and amongst all groups of students. Science progress was outstanding in the Foundation Stage. Students progressed from enquiry and observation in Foundation Stage to hypothesising and fair testing in Primary and then planning of full investigations in the secondary phase.

[View judgments](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Learning skills were good across all phases. Almost all students were enthusiastic and showed good levels of responsibility for learning. Collaboration among students was good in most lessons, principally because of positive interactions and effective classroom management. Best practice was seen where peer teaching and role play occurred. This was especially strong in English literature at Secondary and Post-16 as well as in some mathematics and science lessons. Links to other subjects and applications to the real world were a focal point in a majority of lessons, but underdeveloped in others. Use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for student research was quite limited in lessons. Limited best practice in critical thinking was seen when students used lesson themes to research and present external topics to their peers using multi-media software. The school's Learning Gateway was effective in promoting use of ICT for learning.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The quality of personal responsibility was outstanding. Students showed excellent consideration of each other and were very polite and pleasant even though they shared limited space around the school. Students and adults enjoyed collaborative and open relationships, especially the student leadership which had been extended to include students from Year 1. Student leaders demonstrated mature and committed attitudes and had a significant voice in the school as they worked with adults in school improvement activities. Good understanding of healthy living was evident in students' choice of food. They had serious attitudes towards sports. New curricular and extra-curricular learning activities, and visits by Emirati community members, provided opportunities to understand the culture and values of the UAE. However some Muslim students felt their culture was not understood by others. Some subjects offered students opportunities to investigate their personal culture and country, such as comparing national policies on finance and comparing a Shakespearean plot with current political issues. Awareness of the needs of others who are less fortunate in the local and global environment was raised through a wide variety of campaigns and community projects. Students were eager to act as organisers although they rarely initiated projects. Most students had a positive work ethic and ambitious career plans. Attendance was acceptable; a few students arrived late to lessons each morning.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was good except in the primary phase where it was acceptable. Almost all teachers had secure subject knowledge and, in the better lessons, this facilitated student enquiry and discussion. In most lessons learning objectives and outcomes were shared. The use of revision and plenary sessions provided effective links between lessons. Overuse of didactic teaching with students being passive learners was a feature in a minority of lessons, especially in the primary phase. Teacher-student interactions were positive across the phases with the use of open questions providing the best opportunity for more active participation by students. Strategies to meet the needs of all students were less well-developed. While examples of good practice were evident across the phases, the use of targeted differentiation to meet needs was inconsistent, especially for the lower and higher attaining students. There were examples of good practice in the promotion of critical thinking. The best practice was evident in senior English, mathematics and science lessons.

Assessment was good in all phases. Effective data collection and recording provided the school with ample opportunity to influence teaching and learning to meet the needs of all students. Effective systems were in place to monitor and track student progress across the phases and at the end of key stages. This process was well-managed by relevant phase and faculty leaders. The data was best used in target setting for some students and tailoring curriculum to meet needs. But this was not consistent across the school. Nevertheless, plans were being instituted to provide the necessary professional support and guidance to meet the identified needs of all students, especially the less and more able.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good in the Foundation Stage and Primary, and outstanding in Secondary and Post-16. It had a strong sense of direction and ongoing regular reviewing ensured that the curriculum remained relevant. It offered opportunities for personal choice at IGCSE with a mix of both academic and vocational subjects. Thorough record keeping and planning ensured that transfer between phases did not impair the progress of the students, although some improvements were needed at the end of the Foundation Stage. Senior leaders had identified strategies to develop cross-curricular links further and these were beginning to have an impact. Older students were prepared for the next stage beyond school by a careers programme. This informed them of the options available, and profiling tests enabled them to make career choices based upon their own interests and strengths. Enrichment opportunities within the curriculum were plentiful. Across all the phases an extensive range of extra-curricular activities provided opportunities for students to try new experiences and develop their existing interests. The curriculum was designed to meet the needs of all and

planning took into account the abilities and aspirations of the students. Older students were guided to ensure that their subject choices were appropriate to their needs and abilities. Different learning styles were catered for when planning the curriculum. The curriculum design was well informed by the recording and analysis of assessment data.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for the health and safety of students was good. The school premises and grounds were secure, well-maintained and clean. Emergency evacuation and fire safety procedures were fully implemented and regularly practised. Medicines and hazardous chemicals were securely stored in locked cupboards. Record-keeping was thorough, including screening information, medical records and incident reports. The canteen offered a range of healthy food. Staff members and students were fully aware of child protection arrangements. An activity policy promoted the safety of students participating in educational visits and extra-curricular experiences. The arrival and departure of school buses were very carefully managed and supervised.

Relationships were very strong throughout the school; the teachers showed high levels of care for their students and provided them with effective support for their studies, well-being and personal development. The school had good systems in place to encourage attendance and punctuality. However, the effectiveness of such systems was inconsistent. Careers advice was focused on guiding and preparing the students for their future career pathways. Healthy living was successfully promoted, and the school doctor and nurses provided health advice on such matters as personal hygiene, nutrition, drug awareness and smoking. The school had comprehensive child protection guidelines and appropriate awareness training for staff and students.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The recently appointed Principal provided strong leadership, leading by example and promoting a 'can do' culture. The senior leadership team shared and actively promoted the vision for the school and was entirely focused on improving the quality of learning experiences for the students. Recently appointed or promoted leaders were guiding positive changes. For example in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage One, the leaders had led a concentrated effort to improve the teaching pedagogy and adopt a more holistic provision for students through to Year 2.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The distributive style of leadership had involved more staff in the self-evaluation process. This generated valuable information about the school's performance and areas for improvement, enabling the school's senior and middle leadership to set appropriate priorities for continuing development. Good school improvement and action plans had been devised in response to the previous DSIB report's recommendations, all of which had been addressed.

Partnerships with parents were outstanding. Parents were very supportive of the school. They valued their children's enthusiasm for learning and the efforts of the staff to encourage all students to fulfil their potential. Communication between the school and all parents was excellent. Parents commented on the efficiency of the school's response to their views or concerns, and this was a key element in their involvement in students' learning and the work of the school. Parents, as well as the wider community, were involved in the work experience programmes in Years 10 and 12 through offering opportunities within their companies and establishments.

Governance was good. The school benefited from good professional development opportunities for staff at all levels through the corporate governance model. The school's leadership was held accountable, and this was backed up with effective support systems and networks. There was no direct stakeholder representation in the corporate governance. Most parents were positive about procedures for making representations to the governors and receiving responses. For example, the Cambridge International Parents Association's (CIPA) initiative to enhance the weekend sports provision for the students was supported by governors.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was good. The numbers, qualifications and experience of teachers and other staff matched the demands of the curriculum, and all were effectively deployed. The school's administration was highly effective. The premises were generally well maintained although the hygiene standards of a few of the toilet facilities raised concerns among students and parents. The school's corridors benefited from the range of high quality displays of students' work. The new artificial turf over the large recreation and sports area had greatly improved outside environment. In general, resources were good but some classrooms were overcrowded which adversely affected group work.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

In all phases, Emirati students' attainment and progress showed similar strengths and weaknesses as their peers. Progress in learning and attainment was enhanced by students' purposeful and positive behaviour and attitudes. Almost all Emirati students were meeting or exceeding expectations for attainment in English,

mathematics and science. Overall, progress was good in a majority of subject areas. Most Emirati students had positive attitudes to their studies, were well-behaved, and engaged fully in activities with their peers. The careers advice available to Emirati students was good and they engaged fully in the available extra-curricular activities, including sporting themed events, and the Senior Students Leadership Team. Their learning benefited from the cross-curricular references to local, cultural and heritage issues, and good cross-referencing of the UAE in the context of the Arab countries. Emirati parents were involved in the parents' groups and events, and supported their children's learning.

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

The Director of Achievement provided clear leadership in overseeing the work of the Special Educational Needs Department. The teachers were skilful in identifying the general learning needs of the students, in line with the DSIB categories. Strong links had been established between the parents and the school. Individual education plans and individual learning plans were prepared to assist the teachers' planning and to help the learning support assistants. Forty-six learning support assistants were employed to provide in-class assistance to individual students. Effective withdrawal sessions were provided to address specific learning needs of the students and their progress was regularly monitored. Whilst teachers often indicated the learning tasks for the more able and less able students, there was limited differentiation of classwork and modifications made to a majority of lessons. When the support was closely co-ordinated between the teacher and the learning support assistant, students' progress was good. However, there was inconsistency in the support strategies used to address specific needs, and in tracking the progress of the students with special educational needs against short-term learning targets.

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

Most teachers of Arabic as a first language had secure subject knowledge. However their ability to use their knowledge to enhance students' language skills was not always evident. Generally, teachers' lesson planning was organised and detailed but lessons were often strictly textbook based and did not address the different needs of students well. In Primary, more opportunities were provided for students to interact and apply their learning in meaningful contexts, and lessons were more interesting. In Secondary and Post-16, activities were not always designed well enough to develop language skills particularly reading and writing. Particularly in Secondary and Post-16, too many teachers dominated lessons which often led to students being passive. Questions and interactions in Secondary and Post-16 were rarely challenging, and teachers did not expect students to explain or justify their brief answers to enhance their speaking skills.

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The curriculum was compliant with the MoE coverage requirement. It was strictly based on the MoE text books. Planning for the development of reading and writing skills was effective in the primary phase. However, in the upper grades, it lacked appropriate opportunities to enhance students' language skills particularly in developing their independent reading comprehension skills. Although the curriculum delivery was planned appropriately in terms of its sequence, it was not modified well enough to address the different language abilities of students.

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	382	32%
	Last year	305	18%
Teachers	24		18%
Students	46		11%

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

Only a small proportion of parents, teachers and students responded to the surveys. Those that did were positive about the school. Most parents felt that teachers provided a good quality education at Cambridge International School. A minority who disagreed felt that not all teachers were sufficiently highly skilled, particularly regarding their abilities to teach standard and spoken English to a good standard. Most parents were satisfied with the home-school communications, and the promotion of healthy lifestyles by the school. The overwhelming majority of parents felt that their children were well looked after. Most parents and teachers agreed that the school was led well. About half of the students who responded said that they did not use a wide range of technology to support their learning. A minority of parents felt that the increase in fees had not led to improved educational facilities or higher standards.

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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