

INSPECTION REPORT

Star International School - Umm Al Sheif

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Star International School - Umm Al Sheif

Location	Umm Al Sheif
Type of school	Private
Website	www.starschoolummsheif.com
Telephone	04 348 3314
Address	PO Box 51008, Umm Sheif, Dubai
Principal	Michael Henry
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-13 / Foundation Stage to Year 8
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	579
Largest nationality group of Students	UK
Number of Emirati students	8 (1%)
Date of the inspection	12th November to 14th November 2012

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The context of the school

Located in Umm Al Sheif, Star International School is a private school providing education for boys and girls aged three to 13 years from Foundation Stage to Year 8. The school had added Year 8 in September 2012 and had plans to continue to add additional secondary year groups.

The school followed a UK curriculum. At the time of the inspection there were 579 students on the roll. Students represented 44 nations with the greatest number coming from the United Kingdom. A few students were Emirati. Approximately 11 per cent of students had been identified as having some form of special educational need.

There were 52 full-time teachers, including the Principal and a senior management team. Approximately one third of teachers had been recently appointed. All had appropriate teaching qualifications.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

Key strengths

- The positive behaviour of children and their strong work ethic;
- The quality of provision and the standards achieved in literacy and numeracy in the Foundation Stage;
- The safe and welcoming environment for children;
- The opportunities for children to learn outside of the classroom;
- The commitment of the Principal, senior and middle managers to improving the school.

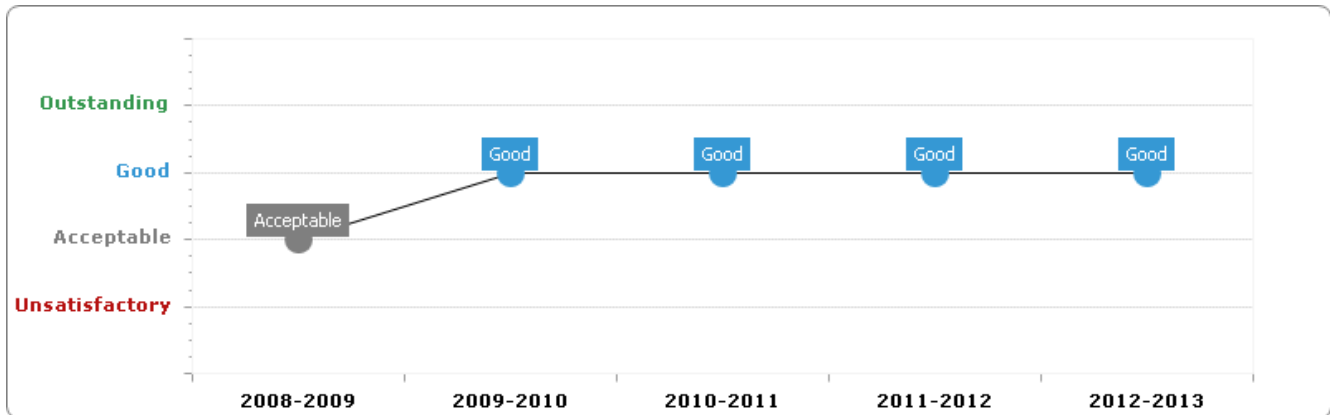
Recommendations

- Continue to improve the standards of teaching and learning in Islamic Education and Arabic to improve attainment;
- Further develop the effectiveness of assessment across the school;
- Develop further the effectiveness of the Achievement Centre in supporting children with special education needs;
- Broaden the stakeholder representation on the governing body.

Progress since the last inspection

- Five new teachers of Islamic Education and Arabic had been appointed since the last inspection, but little progress had been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning in these subjects;
- The directors continued to support the school and hold it to account for its performance but no progress had been made in widening the stakeholder representation on the board.
- Time available for senior managers for whole school duties had not increased. All had a full-time teaching commitment apart from the Principal. However, additional appointments had supported certain improvements.
- A new teacher of information and communications technology (ICT) had been appointed and a second ICT suite installed. Teachers and students made good use of the available technology including interactive whiteboards to engage students and enhance learning. Younger children made very effective use of portable digital sound recorders to develop their talking and reading skills.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Acceptable	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

In Islamic Education, students' attainment in primary and secondary was acceptable. Most had a basic knowledge of the key principles of faith and worship in Islam. The attainment in Arabic as a first language and additional language was acceptable. Most students' skills in listening and speaking were stronger than those in reading and writing. In the Foundation Stage attainment was outstanding in English and mathematics. Almost all children achieved very high standards for their age in speaking and listening, reading and writing, and in their ability to count and measure. In mathematics and science, in primary and secondary, standards of attainment were good at each phase. Most students' skills in problem solving in mathematics were well developed and, by the end of Year 8, standards exceeded those expected of students of that age. In primary, students' attainment in English was acceptable. Standards in speaking, listening and reading were stronger than writing, where students did not build well on their previous attainment.

In Islamic Education and Arabic, progress was acceptable at each phase. Students made better progress in speaking and listening compared to reading and writing. At Foundation Stage, children made outstanding progress in English and mathematics while they made good progress in science. Primary students made good progress in mathematics and science and acceptable progress in English. Although progress in English was uneven across the school, most students made good progress by the end of Year 8 in all areas of English. Secondary students made good overall progress in science and mathematics with strengths in algebra.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Almost all students were confident and had positive and responsible attitudes. Their behaviour was exemplary and they showed a strong commitment to the school. Relationships between students and with staff were strong and very respectful. Almost all students demonstrated an excellent understanding about healthy food choices and they took part in activities that promoted healthy living. Almost all students except at the Foundation Stage demonstrated a clear understanding of Islamic values and their impact on contemporary society in Dubai. Almost all students exhibited a positive attitude towards the heritage and local traditions of the UAE and could explain their relevance to people in Dubai. Almost all children in the Foundation Stage were community minded and cared for their immediate environment. Across the school, most students showed a very good understanding of environmental sustainability.

They cared for their school and displayed an excellent work ethic. Almost all students were aware of the need to conserve water and electricity and were involved in a variety of recycling schemes.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

The quality of teaching was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good in primary and secondary phases. Most teachers knew their subjects well and understood that students learn best through a rich variety of play, investigation, practical and group work. They used time efficiently and provided a range of high quality resources to enable students to deepen their understanding of new concepts. Most teachers had high expectations of their students and used effective questioning to engage them in meaningful discussions and to promote higher order thinking. This was less well developed in Islamic Education and Arabic. Teachers made good use of the available technology to enhance learning both in the classroom and in the computer rooms. Teaching in other subjects was generally good.

The quality of students' learning was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good in primary and secondary phases. Almost all students were enthusiastic learners who rose to a challenge. They knew how well they were doing and in most subjects they knew how to improve their work and make better progress. They could work independently and in groups and enjoyed sharing their ideas with their peers, supporting each other's learning and justifying their responses. Non-Arabic students had limited opportunities to discuss their learning in Arabic lessons. Most students could see the purpose of their learning in the real world and in their own lives. They were persistent and stuck at a task until it was finished although in a few lessons they were overly dependent on the teacher for support. They used technology confidently but opportunities for independent research in school were rare.

Assessment was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the primary and secondary phases. Assessment data provided reliable benchmarks against international standards. Students' progress was being monitored through the new assessment system. In the Foundation Stage, teachers observed children closely and used this information to plan for continuous progress. In the primary and secondary phases a minority of teachers were yet to use assessment data sufficiently well to enable all students to make expected progress. The best teachers checked for understanding during and at the end of lessons although this was less well developed in Arabic and Islamic lessons. Students were involved in self-assessment in

most subjects. Written feedback in books was generally helpful in providing students with guidance on how to improve their work. Teachers' assessments of students' work were moderated to ensure consistency and accuracy of judgements.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was broad, balanced and well organised and helped students to build on their prior knowledge. At the Foundation Stage, the curriculum was outstanding. It was very well planned to provide a wide range of stimulating and imaginative activities that successfully promoted students' investigative skills and encouraged them to be interested in the world around them. Planning for Year 1 was very closely linked to that for the Foundation Stage. The youngest children transferred smoothly and confidently to the next phase of their education. Throughout the school links between phases were effective. The school had good procedures to review the effectiveness of planning and to make adjustments as necessary. The school had a very wide range of out of school activities and visits that enriched many aspects of the curriculum and enhanced students' personal development. Students had many opportunities to develop their independence and understanding of how to be effective learners.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school had rigorous systems that ensured that all matters of health and safety were outstanding. An external contractor maintained high levels of safety on the school buses. Site security was maintained throughout the day. Spacious corridors and stairways allowed safe movement around the school. Fire evacuation drills were held regularly. The highly effective school clinic was well equipped and the nurse followed up absences. Healthy living was a high priority throughout the school. Child protection arrangements and training for staff were very secure.

Staff-student relationships were positive. The school positively promoted good attendance and punctuality. Absences were followed up meticulously. Lateness figures were provided to all class teachers and these were discussed with parents when necessary. Although the well-being and personal development of students were not monitored systematically, teachers were caring and mindful of students' personal and social development. The introduction of tutor time in the secondary phase was planned to improve teachers' awareness of students' needs.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students' learning needs were identified through teacher observation and through the use of external agencies. However, standardised diagnostic testing was not available to facilitate accurate identification of need. Support was provided to students with special education needs through in-class differentiation, additional support in class and by individual and small group teaching. High quality extra tuition was provided by school staff. The recently established Achievement Centre had not yet developed effective systems to target support, evaluate its effectiveness and track the progress of students. Overall, the progress of students with special education needs was acceptable, with some individual examples of good progress in English and science.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The Principal had high, exacting standards. Senior leaders were highly committed to the school and to its future growth. Leadership was distributed very well throughout the school. Subject co-ordinators in English, mathematics and science had a positive impact on their subject areas. The recent introduction of year heads and a full-time inclusion co-ordinator were positive developments. Relationships and communication between senior staff and teachers were strong. The capacity of the senior leadership team was limited by the amount of time they had for their whole school duties.

The school's self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Lessons were monitored and evaluated well by the senior staff. Peer evaluation of lessons had been introduced in upper primary. A staff working party had devised a good performance management system. This system was supported by clear job descriptions, which set appropriately high expectations for staff at each level. Improvement planning was detailed. However, the complex plans made it difficult for staff to identify the main priorities.

Partnerships between the school, parents and community were good. A variety of social and educational events took place. These included a very successful Eid social event that was organised by Muslim parents. Curriculum workshops had been developed for parents to brief them on developments in the school. Communication between the school and parents was very effective. Good use was made of home-school diaries, reports on children and parent-teacher meetings. Students' end of year reports were detailed and included next steps in students' learning.

In addition a more 'child friendly' mid-term report was issued. The school had formed links with other schools and these were beneficial to teachers as they could share good practice. The school was developing its links with local organisations and planned to further its links with the local community.

Governance was acceptable. The directors were regular visitors to the school and held it and the Principal to account. Directors had good links with parents and communicated concerns to the school. The Board supported the school by appointing more staff and providing additional resources. The board still did not have a wider stakeholder representation.

The school operated smoothly and efficiently. There was an appropriate number of well-qualified and experienced staff who were appropriately deployed. The buildings and outside areas were spacious, attractive, well maintained and cleaned to a high standard. There was ample space for effective teaching for all subjects. The school had two well-designed libraries. Staff made good use of a wide range of good quality resources for learning.

[View judgements](#)

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	164	44%
	Last year	155	46%
Teachers	34		64%
Students	There were no senior students in the school		

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

Almost all parents who responded to the survey thought that their child was making good progress in the key subjects, except in Islamic Education, where a minority did not think that their children were making sufficient progress. Almost all thought that their children liked school and felt safe there. Parents thought that students' behaviour was good and all felt that students were successfully encouraged to take on responsibilities. Most were pleased with the teaching and the way in which teachers helped their children to improve. Teachers had very positive views of the school and their roles in it. Almost all parents and teachers thought that the school was well led.

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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