

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Mawakeb School - Al Garhoud

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Mawakeb School - Al Garhoud

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.almawakeb.sch.ae
Telephone	04-2851415
Address	P O Box 10799, Dubai
Principal	Nubugh Nasr (Acting Principal - Omar Hatoum)
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten 1-Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2498
Largest nationality group of students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	362 (14%)
Date of the inspection	10th to 13th February 2014

Contents

The context of the school	3
Overall school performance 2013-2014	4
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
Progress since the last inspection	5
Trend of overall performance.....	5
How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?	6
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are teaching and assessment?.....	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
How well does the school provide for Emirati students?.....	15
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	15
How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?.....	15
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	17
What happens next?.....	18
How to contact us	18

The context of the school

Al Mawakeb School, in Al Garhoud, is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Grade 12, aged 3 to 18 years. It is a cosmopolitan school and serves a predominantly Middle Eastern Arab community.

At the time of the inspection, there were 2,498 students on roll, an increase of almost 100 over the previous academic year. 538 students were new to the school. More than 60 nationalities were represented in the student body. Approximately 15 per cent of the students were Emirati. From Grades 5 to 12, boys and girls were taught separately for all lessons.

The school offered an adapted United States curriculum, plus the Ministry of Education Islamic Education and Arabic curricula. The Kindergarten curriculum was delivered in three languages: Arabic, English and French. In the rest of the school, the curriculum was delivered in English, with Arabic and French as separate subjects. Grade 12 students participated in SAT tests. At the time of the inspection, 37 students had been identified as having special educational needs. A few were physically disabled.

The acting Principal was in his fifth year in that post. There were 135 teachers, including senior leaders. 32 teachers were new to the school. Although almost all teachers held a first degree, about 38 per cent did not have a qualification in teaching. There were 18 teaching assistants who supported teachers in the Kindergarten.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Good attainment and progress of students in English, mathematics and science across phases and in Arabic as a first language in the elementary phase;
- The good progress made by Kindergarten students in their learning through tri-lingual teaching;
- The good attitudes and behaviour of students across all phases, the harmonious community of students from many nationalities and the very positive relationships established between teachers and students;
- The effective programme of continuous professional development available to all teachers;
- The Governing Board's and senior leaders' commitment to school improvement and the success of staff in bringing about improved learning experiences for students.

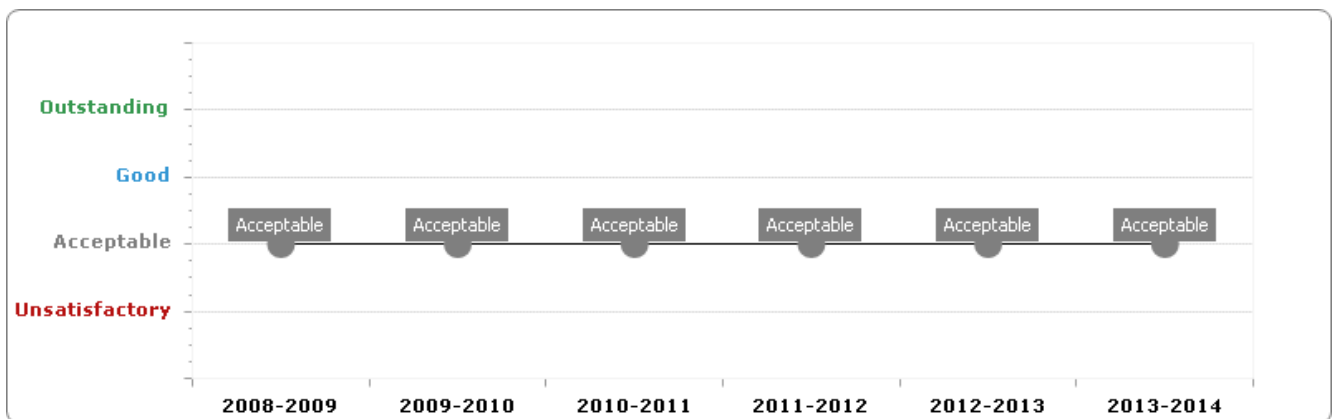
Recommendations

- Raise the expectations of students in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language by improving teaching, learning and assessment.
- In order to raise standards, make effective use of assessment to set learning targets for each student, using the United States Common Core Standards for English, mathematics and science, and compare the school's assessments with external, valid and reliable examinations which are closely aligned to these standards.
- Ensure that students' independent learning skills are developed effectively and that the curriculum in the creative arts and in physical education develop students' skills progressively.
- Ensure that students, particularly those in the middle phase and those with special educational needs, experience tasks matched to their abilities.
- Ensure that teachers evaluate their lessons and make changes where needed to improve students' classroom experiences.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school now complied with Ministry of Education (MoE) requirements relating to the teaching of Arabic as a first language in the high school phase.
- School leaders were focused on school improvement, all staff had worked extremely hard to address issues arising from the previous inspection and had been successful in taking the school further along the journey of improvement.
- Students' learning experiences in many lessons had improved significantly because they were now more regularly active in their learning.
- There was increased and effective use of technology to communicate with parents, and in lessons by teachers and students to improve learning and teaching.
- The curriculum had been reviewed and remodelled.
- The programme for staff development and appraisal had improved considerably.
- An Inclusion Manager and a full-time psychologist had been appointed.
- More classrooms had been fitted with interactive boards and senior students had improved access to mobile technology to support teaching and learning.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic, except for elementary Arabic as a first language, which was good. Attainment in English, mathematics and science was good across the school. In Islamic Education, most students demonstrated levels of knowledge, skills and understanding that were in line with curriculum standards. Most students were able to link some of the concepts learned in lessons to daily life. Students' Holy Qur'an recitation and memorisation skills were limited. In Arabic as a first language, students' listening skills were well developed in the elementary and middle phases. Most students could communicate their ideas fluently but many relied on colloquial language too frequently. Reading skills were better in elementary and middle. Writing skills were in line with expectations for the majority but the writing of a significant proportion of students was not good enough, particularly in the high school phase. In Arabic as an additional language, most students could follow their teachers' instructions. In the elementary and middle phases, speaking was restricted to limited vocabulary from a narrow range of familiar topics but it was better for older students. Reading and writing across the school was still developing for a significant proportion of students. In English, students attained well because of regular activities which required them to apply their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Students were very frequently challenged to think critically, reach a conclusion, and explain or justify their thoughts to others. In mathematics, students were strongest in calculations and procedural mathematics in all phases; geometry skills were weaker. In all sciences, attainment was consistently good in all phases.

Students' progress was very much in line with their attainment. It differed in high school Islamic Education and middle phase Arabic as a first language, where progress was good. In Islamic Education, most students made adequate progress but high school students made better progress in developing deeper and more detailed knowledge and understanding of Islamic concepts and values. Progress with Holy Qur'an recitation was limited across the school. In Arabic as a first language, in the elementary and middle phases, students made good progress in learning grammar and using standard Arabic to provide responses to questions in phrase or sentence forms. Older students' progress with writing was slow. In Arabic as an additional language, most students across the school were making acceptable progress in their listening and reading. In English, a majority of students were acquiring language skills well and applying them capably. Progress in mathematics was strong in all phases, and students adopted a variety of approaches while developing their numeracy skills. In science, good progress was made in lessons against appropriate learning objectives, although applying scientific knowledge to unfamiliar global contexts was limited.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The learning skills of most students were good; they were acceptable in the middle phase. In the best lessons, especially in the elementary phase, students understood what was required of them. They worked collaboratively to engage in rich discussions which deepened their learning. Enquiry skills were evident in mathematics and science but these were not regular features in other subjects. Most students had secure knowledge but were not always given the opportunity to apply this to real-life situations. This limited their ability to solve problems and achieve higher levels of attainment and progress in both English and science. The increased access to technology had enhanced the students' ability to take responsibility for their learning. This was strongest in the high school. The students' ability to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses was good in mathematics but was inconsistent across other subject areas. Consequently, students did not always know what they had to do next to improve.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Most aspects of students' personal and social development were good. The community and environmental responsibility of elementary and middle phase students were acceptable. Most students had mature attitudes. They demonstrated self-reliance when learning and when given the opportunity, responded well to critical feedback. They behaved well and relationships were respectful. A significant minority of students were regularly late for lessons and at the start of the school day. This disrupted their learning. Most students were sensitive to the needs of others, readily offering support when needed. Many students engaged with activities which promoted healthy lifestyles, but this was not always reflected in their diet choices. Students demonstrated well-developed understanding of Islamic values. They had a good understanding of the relevance and impact of these values on life in the UAE but needed support to apply key messages to their own lives and experiences. Emirati traditions and cultural heritage were respected and understood by students who recognised their value to UAE citizens. Students knew about their own culture and showed interest in developing deeper understanding of other cultures. Most students knew the importance of hard work. Some younger students acted as Student Council representatives but most lacked sufficient opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Relative to their age group, Kindergarten and high school students had better knowledge about conservation and environmental issues than other students. Some applied this knowledge well in their daily lives.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was good in most phases; it was acceptable in the middle phase. Lessons were well planned and were often imaginative. Some teachers used ongoing assessments and observations of the pace of learning to modify their plans to meet students' needs. Teachers had good subject knowledge. They were able to extend student learning by asking questions which required them to think critically. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) was an important instructional tool. Some teachers used an interactive whiteboard in class and emailed students a copy of the lesson. In another instance, students wrote on laptops and then posted their drafts to the whiteboard. Some teachers consistently challenged all students and provided opportunities to have them apply their knowledge, which encouraged students to gain and use new skills and knowledge. Teachers used collaborative activities regularly to enhance learning. Teaching in art and physical education did not have enough focus on the progressive development of students' skills.

Assessment was acceptable in most phases except in the high school, where it was good. The school did not use entry tests to establish students' starting points. Oral feedback given to students during lessons was extensive. Written feedback on notebooks and written work seldom included advice to help students to improve their work, except in mathematics. There was little evidence of students' reviews of their own work or that of others to encourage evaluative feedback. There was an extensive system used to record examinations, both internal and external. Results were analysed thoroughly to track attainment and progress of all students and student groups including boys, girls, Emiratis, expatriates and those with special educational needs. Action plans ensued resulting in changes to the curriculum and to assessment procedures. Test results were communicated to parents following each periodic test. Personal learning plans (PLPs) were devised for all students who scored below 70 per cent to track their attainment and progress in subject areas and skills.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good in Kindergarten, elementary and middle school; it was acceptable in the high school. Since the previous inspection, the school had thoroughly reviewed and developed its curriculum to ensure that it systematically increased students' knowledge and skills as they progressed from Kindergarten to high school, notably in English, mathematics and science. Some subjects, including art and physical education, were less developed and the range of subjects studied by high school students was not broad. Through a considered blend of international curricula, there was a strong focus on promoting personal development and learning. The impact of this could be seen, for example, in the improving picture of progress in science and good progress and attainment in several other key subjects. The school made some use of information arising from tests and lesson observations to modify the curriculum at regular reviews. Meaningful links were made between subjects, although there were missed opportunities to extend these to enhance learning, for example to use ICT in more subjects, and in the Kindergarten. The school had extended its range of enrichment opportunities, although in some subjects, including mathematics, this could have been extended further. The Kindergarten's tri-lingual curriculum remained a strength.

Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students was acceptable throughout the school. The provision for some groups of students was too inconsistent to be good overall. Since the previous inspection, through an extensive support programme, the school had ensured that Arabic as a first language met the MoE requirements. While the school clearly identified students with special educational needs and more able students, the work set for these students was not always tailored well enough to their levels of understanding. Similarly, the curriculum was not always adapted well for students learning English as an additional language. Lessons planned for confident English speakers were sometimes delivered to other students without due attention to their levels of English language acquisition. Older students would have benefited from more choice of subjects to fulfil their interests and aspirations.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The arrangements to ensure the safety and well-being of students were good. Procedures on school buses were comprehensive, detailed and effective. Well-trained school and RTA staff, vigilant supervisors and multiple attendance checks ensured students' safety. Procedures for private car drop-off and pick-up of students were carefully supervised. School buildings were safe and suitably maintained, and met the needs of most students. Fire safety evacuation procedures and equipment were carefully monitored and regularly checked. The school's three clinics were well maintained and professionally staffed. Medical staff carried out periodic student wellness checks. Student health records were up-to-date and maintained securely. All staff had received training in the school's child protection policy. The monitoring of groups of students during lessons was inconsistent and there was overcrowding in the Kindergarten and elementary playgrounds.

The support for students was acceptable in the elementary and middle phases, and good elsewhere. There were strong student-staff relationships across the school. The management of attendance and punctuality was inconsistent. Accurate record keeping of late arrivals was variable and sometimes incomplete, especially in the boys' section. The school was inclusive and made provision for students with special educational needs. Working with the special educational needs co-ordinator and school psychologist, teachers identified students who potentially required additional support. Learning support for these students was primarily given by class teachers and the psychologist. Differentiation of lesson content to meet students' individual needs was strongest in the upper grades. The career counsellor provided excellent support for almost all high school students. She guided students in college selection and assisted them in the application process. However, there was no counsellor in the girls' section to support their wider needs.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was good. There was now a collective determination and drive from the Governing Body, school leaders and teachers to improve students' learning experiences. There was scope to distribute leadership by creating further middle management posts. Senior students took on several leadership roles, including acting as Student Senate representatives, community service and school activity club leaders. Notable improvements had been made in the work of the school over the last year. The school now demonstrated the capacity to move further forward.

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Good use had been made of the previous inspection recommendations to devise an action plan for improvement which had been implemented and progress made monitored. Most of the recommendations had been addressed. There was a tendency to evaluate improvement more positively than the evidence sometimes justified. Teachers were not expected enough to evaluate their own lessons and take account of this in planning next lessons in order that all students' learning needs were fully met. Likewise, there was insufficient attention given to student self- and peer-assessment. Teachers generally felt involved in the process of school evaluation and parents' views were sought through regular surveys.

Partnership with parents and the community was good. The school communicated regularly with parents and increasing use was being made of technology to enhance this. Parents supported the work of the school through special events, including National Day and International Day. Students participated in many community events, including visits to places of cultural interest, beach cleaning and supporting local charity and awareness raising events. Most parents felt welcome in the school and were satisfied that concerns raised were suitably addressed. Parent-teacher-student meetings and written reports to review student progress did not have enough focus on what students required to do next to improve their work.

Governance was good. The Governing Board had been instrumental in the last year in fostering a determination in the school's senior leadership team and teaching staff to improve the work of the school. Board members knew the school well, visited the school frequently and now held school leaders to greater account. There was no representative Parent Council to provide an effective communication channel to the Board so that wider parental concerns could influence the school's development.

Management was acceptable. Day-to-day organisation of the school was smooth, although the start of the school day was not punctual enough. Buildings and grounds were reasonably well maintained. Specialist facilities were restricted. Learning resources had been improved, including ICT. Teachers were qualified academically and those new to the school received a good induction programme. Good teacher appraisal and development programmes were now in place. The school lacked specialist staffing to serve the interests of girls at all grades, and for special educational needs.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The attainment and progress of Emirati students in English, mathematics and science was good. In Islamic Education and Arabic, they had acceptable attainment and progress. A minority of students who participated in extra tuition programmes in Arabic made good progress. Emirati students displayed good attitudes, behaviour and relationships with other students and staff. The curriculum was developed to ensure that it systematically built students' knowledge and skills as they progressed from Kindergarten to the high school. However, the range and breadth of subjects studied by high school students was not broad. Parents of Emirati students felt that it was a family-focused school which cared about students as individuals. Many parents felt they didn't receive sufficiently regular progress reports about their children.

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

The school had made progress since the last inspection in the development of the programme for students with special educational needs. The school's admissions policy was inclusive. Teachers were largely responsible for the initial identification of students with special needs. With parental approval, the school's psychologist observed and informally assessed these students to determine their needs. In some cases, students were referred to outside agencies for additional assessments when necessary. Parents, teachers and staff met together to jointly develop individual education plans (IEPs) but students were not regularly involved in this process. Due to a lack of entry data in most subjects, the majority of IEPs did not have precise learning targets nor did they effectively modify the curriculum in order to meet the specific learning needs of students. This was particularly true in the elementary school. In a majority of classes, differentiation in lessons, targeted questioning by teachers and opportunities for students to work collaboratively were used to meet both the learning and social needs of students. A majority of students with special educational needs made acceptable progress and a few made good progress in key subjects. Modifications to the curriculum to appropriately challenge gifted and/or talented students were underdeveloped.

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

Lessons in Arabic as a first language were often better in quality in the elementary and middle phases than elsewhere. In most lessons, teachers' subject knowledge was secure, especially in these two phases although not consistently so. Teachers planned lessons to a common format with clear expectations. However, planned differentiated activities did not always materialise in practice. The majority of teachers had clear learning objectives for each lesson and these were shared with students. The lesson objectives set were largely appropriate. In some lessons, teacher-student interaction was positive and effective.

Questions asked of students were varied but, in some cases, provided few opportunities for reflection and to deepen understanding for all students.

The school used the MoE curriculum. Some attempts were made to link together different aspects of the Arabic curriculum. Teachers usually set work for different ability groups of students but with varying degrees of success. A special programme was set for students who were of Arabic nationalities but who had a weak understanding of Arabic. The school had developed an extra handbook to support the development of students' handwriting, listening and reading. There were limited enrichment activities implemented by the school to support and extend students' progress in Arabic as a first language particularly in reading and writing.

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	320	22%
	Last year	333	25%
Teachers	116		82%
Students	428		96%

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

There was a small decrease in the number of parents responding this year compared to last year but many more students and slightly more teachers responded this year. Most parents and almost all students and teachers were satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. Most parents thought that children made good progress in English, mathematics and science and fewer thought this for Islamic Education and Arabic. Almost all said that their child was safe and well looked after at school. Most parents and almost all teachers thought that the school was well led. A significant minority of parents and a third of students thought that the school did not provide a sufficiently wide range of subjects and activities to choose from. Almost all students said they were making good progress in English, most felt the same way for Arabic as a first language, mathematics, science and Islamic Education. A third of students expressed concerns about behaviour in school. Almost all teachers thought that the school supported their professional development well.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:
inspection@khda.gov.ae

Copyright © 2014

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school.

It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.