

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Mizhar American Academy Private School

Report published in April 2013

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Mizhar American Academy Private School

Location	Al Mizhar
Type of school	Private
Website	www.americanacademy.ae
Telephone	04-2887250
Address	P.O.Box 78484,11A Street Mizhar 1,Dubai
Principal	Delicia Ann Scotto
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Pre Kindergarten -Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	659
Students' nationalities	Emirati, other Arab nationalities, US.
Number of Emirati students	396 (60%)
Date of the inspection	8th October to 10th October 2013

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The context of the school

Al Mizhar American Academy is a private school providing education for girls from pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12, aged three to 18 years. For the purposes of this report pre-Kindergarten is included in Kindergarten. Twenty two boys also attended the KG phase. The majority of students were Emirati but the school also catered for students from the GCC, the US, Asia and other nationalities, with over twenty nationalities being represented on the student roll. Most students had Arabic as a mother tongue.

The school provided an American curriculum modified by including the local culture and students received a high school diploma upon completion of Grade 12. External tests included the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Advanced Placement exams for Grade 12 students, Pre-SAT exams for Grade 11 and SAT exams for Grade 12. The school was fully accredited by the Council of International Schools and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

At the time of the inspection there were 659 students on roll. Just over 60 per cent of the students were Emirati. There were 67 teaching staff supported by 19 assistants. The Principal had appointed a counselor for the elementary section.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

Key strengths

- The good attainment and progress of students in all subjects, including outstanding performance in English in the high school;
- The outstanding personal and social development of students in school;
- The outstanding protection and support of students in school;
- The outstanding leadership, relationships with parents and resources in school.

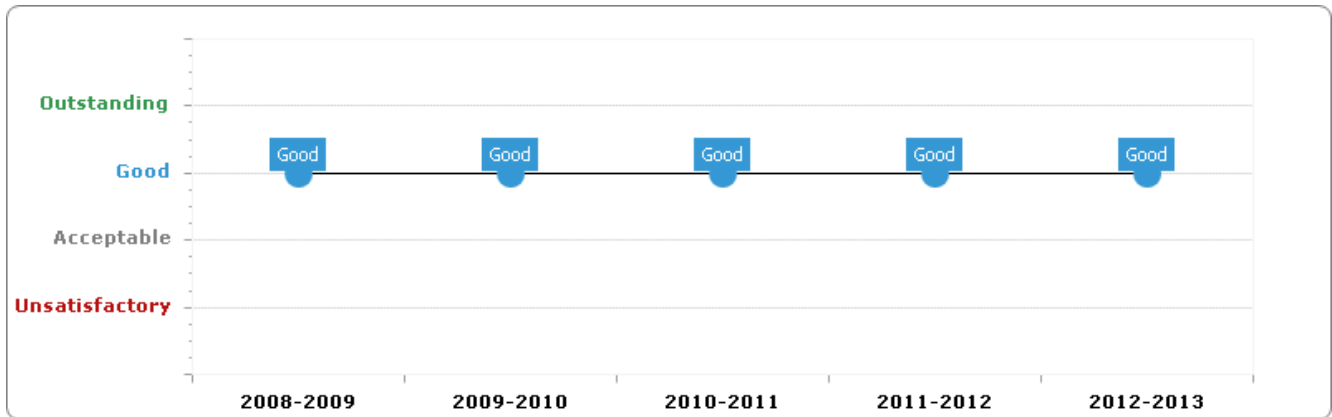
Recommendations

- Raise attainment levels in key subjects by increasing the level of challenge for all students;
- Implement different teaching strategies to enable all students to access their next steps in learning;
- Use assessment information to set challenging targets for students and help them understand what they need to do to improve;
- Further develop the curriculum to increase the challenge for different groups of students.

Progress since the last inspection

- The improvement in attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language in the high school;
- Students' stronger understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global values across all phases;
- The improved quality of staff, facilities and resources in school which was outstanding.

Trend of overall performance



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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
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	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
English				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
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	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language were good across the three phases of the school. In Islamic Education strengths included the students' skills in Qur'an recitation and their interpretation of Qur'anic verses, along with their ability to apply Islamic concepts, values, and laws in their own lives. In Arabic as a first language, listening and responding skills of the majority of students across all phases were strong, whereas speaking was less developed in upper middle school and lower high school classes. Writing was the least developed skill as students had few opportunities to write at length and creatively. Attainment in Arabic as an additional language was good in all phases except middle grades where it was acceptable. Listening and responding skills of the majority of students were good across the phases. Speaking skills of the majority of students in the end of elementary were stronger than those of students in middle and secondary school. Attainment in English was good in the Kindergarten, elementary, and middle school. Kindergarten students could predict what would happen next in a story and write their own stories in journals. In the middle school, students could identify examples of indirect and direct characterization. In the high school attainment was outstanding. Students could explain plagiarism and the need to cite sources in their written work. They could use direct quotes as well as paraphrasing and citing in them their research papers. Attainment in mathematics and science was good across all phases. Most students across all phases demonstrated levels of knowledge, skills and understanding that were expected by the school's core curriculum standards.

Progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language was good across the three phases of the school. In Islamic Education the majority of students demonstrated good progress in almost all aspects, particularly in recitation and Tajweed skills. Progress in Arabic as a first language was noted in the oral language skills. Progress in Arabic as an additional language was good in all three phases. Reading aloud and reading comprehension skills were good in all phases. In middle and senior phases students showed stronger writing skills than the younger ones. Progress in English was good from Kindergarten to middle school and outstanding in the high school. Students in the high school made faster progress as they had to rise to the challenges set by their examination board. They had few difficulties in understanding any kind of spoken or written language and they used elaborate vocabulary in their writing. Progress in mathematics was good in all phases, as measured against their learning objectives but the majority were not fully challenged and thus did not reach their full potential. Progress was good in most science lessons across Kindergarten to Grade 12 when judged against lesson objectives. The majority of students made better than expected progress in relation to the starting points. Progress was also good when student notebooks were reviewed over time. School wide assessment reflected better than expected progress by the majority of students. However lesson planning did not always cater for sufficient challenge or pace which resulted in reduced progress.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour across all phases of the school were outstanding. The school had a positive learning environment with students conducting themselves respectfully and kindly. They were responsible learners who responded very well to critical feedback from their teachers during lessons. Their rapport with their peers and adults was outstanding. They were very health conscious and made excellent choices about healthy eating and regular physical exercise.

Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural, and global awareness were outstanding across the four phases of the school. Students demonstrated well-adopted Islamic values such as kindness, friendliness and cooperation, and were able to identify and describe key Islamic values and concepts. Students could identify and talk in relative depth about local traditions and heritage. They could discuss the development of the United Arab Emirates and the changes that have taken place over time. Students could explain many aspects of living in a culturally diverse hub like Dubai. They showed excellent skills in embracing change without compromising their national identity.

Most students demonstrated an outstanding level of community and environmental responsibility across all school phases. Younger children took responsibility in caring for their school and classroom environments. They collaborated effectively with one another and could describe their experiences with the natural world. Students across the school had a strong voice. They showed an excellent work ethic by extending their learning beyond the set requirements. They took pride in leading on community initiatives such as working with Al Noor Centre for Special Needs, the Rashid Pediatric Centre, K9 Friends, the Dubai Autism Centre and the Dubai Centre for Special Needs. Senior students were heavily involved in community service during the annual "Make a Difference" week. They also took part in well-planned enterprise activities and business projects and developed key work skills such as "Young Enterprise Awards". The strong environmental awareness of students was reflected in their projects and school displays and through the work of the Environmental Awareness Group.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was good across all phases. In a few lessons it was outstanding. The majority of teachers showed good subject knowledge and planned lessons with care. Teachers across all phases knew how children learn. In the few better lessons teachers ensured that all students were engaged, actively involved and appropriately challenged. Weaker lessons did not present the necessary challenge. They lacked appropriate objectives, activities and questioning, and did not meet the needs of all students. Collaborative

group work was used regularly to promote active learning, discussion and inquiry. In better lessons questioning was used to develop inquiry and to check prior knowledge and understanding. This more 'open' questioning encouraged students to reflect and develop thinking skills.

The quality of learning was good at all phases. The majority of students across the school were motivated learners, keen to participate in lessons and to make progress in their studies. In group activities they collaborated well with peers. The majority demonstrated good listening skills and could discuss and explain their learning. Students responded positively when given the opportunity to apply their knowledge within real life contexts, use information and communications technology (ICT) and make connections across subjects. Students progressively developed greater independence and self-reliance as they moved up the school. By Grades 11 and 12 the majority of students demonstrated high levels of enquiry and research skills.

The quality of assessment was good overall. The school had commenced the process of developing consistent and effective assessment processes for monitoring students' progress. External standardised testing data was available annually for English, mathematics and science. Students were also involved in peer and self-assessment in a range of lessons. Teachers' questioning techniques were developing to provide teachers with a clear overview of their students' attainment and progress. Teachers were developing a stronger knowledge of individual students' strengths and weaknesses. Assessment data was accurate and detailed and some analysis of it was in place, although teachers were not able to identify patterns of attainment accurately. The marking of students' work did not always provide constructive help to advise students of their next learning steps. The use of assessment data to plan lessons and to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all students was inconsistent across the phases. A robust target-setting and tracking process to monitor progress was not yet in place.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good across all four phases. It had a clear rationale that was based on the mission statement and was generally broad and balanced. Progression and continuity were supported by detailed curriculum maps and unit plans. Transition arrangements between phases of the school ensured that most students were ready for their next stages. The curriculum was reviewed regularly and updated. The curriculum was providing more opportunities for independent learning and critical thinking, but such provision was not consistent. The curriculum was broad, but was not consistently adapted to meet the needs of the more able and the underachieving; it did not consistently provide high level challenge. Cross-cultural links existed in most key subjects, and it was enriched by a variety of extra-curricular activities.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety procedures in school were outstanding. The arrangements to secure a healthy, safe and secure environment in all parts of the school were very well orchestrated. There were regular and thorough site and transport risk assessments. Student supervision at breaks-times was a strength of the provision. Premises were modern and the facilities included access for students with special needs and included ramps and an elevator. The school was energy efficient and had won an award for its energy conservation efforts in 2012. Health and safety records were regularly updated and adequately maintained. The entire school team guided and supported students well, as they learned how to make wise healthy living decisions. The care and welfare of students, including child protection, was a high priority. The staff handbook included important guidance on student safety.

The quality of support in the school was outstanding. Staff-student relationships were positive and respectful and had a positive impact on students' personal and academic development. The school had an outstanding attendance management system. It used strong partnerships with parents to ensure punctuality and good attendance. Attendance had improved since the last inspection.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school identified students with various types of special educational needs including physical, learning, behavioural and English as an additional language needs. However, the school was yet to develop a robust system for identifying gifted and talented students. Individual Education Plans were designed and students with special educational needs received additional support from their teachers and from specialists within the classroom and in the well-resourced learning centre. The teaching assistants' support was very effective. The teaching assistants played an important part in the lesson planning process, resulting in purposeful interventions during lessons. This enabled most students with special educational needs to make good progress. The school modified the curriculum to enable the less able student to work at their own pace alongside their peers. Some students worked on different tasks with the teaching assistants in the same class. However, when students were withdrawn of their regular lessons to work in the Learning Center they did not always follow the same programme of study as their peers. This hindered their progress.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was outstanding. The leaders at all levels were dynamic and shared a common vision. The distribution of responsibilities was clear and strategic. Its key messages were fully understood by all stakeholders who were extremely receptive and driven to improve their practice.

Self-evaluation plans were good and quickly evolving. Priorities for improvement were clearly defined, contextualized and distributed between the different school leaders. They were broken down into achievable milestones. A new quarterly reporting system had been recently implemented. Self-evaluation that was linked to students' progress varied between departments. Strategies to identify different groups of students and enable them to access their next steps in learning required review. This was particularly the case for high and low achievers who did not benefit from individual learning plans with clear targets for improvement. Recommendations from the previous inspection report were thoroughly addressed. Improvement in students' attainment and progress in Arabic and Islamic Education were noticed. The school's approach to evaluate, monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning was good. It informed the school's professional development programme. However, the school did not widen the outstanding practice seen in some lessons.

The partnership and communication with parents was outstanding. Parents were regularly informed about both the academic and personal development of their children. Parents were extremely positive about the quality of education provided by the school in the questionnaires and discussions. Links with local businesses and the community were purposeful and varied. They had a positive impact on students' learning and personal development.

Governance of the school was good. The board of governors supported the leadership team well and shared the same vision of improvement. The board included educators who played active roles in the school improvement. This included the evaluation of teaching and learning and support in some departments. Governors understood clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Parents' representation was increasing through their contribution in sub-committees and surveys.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was outstanding. Teachers had appropriate qualifications and new recruits were well supported. Teaching assistants were used effectively in lessons. The pastoral team supported students' personal and academic development effectively. Resources for learning such as ICT were rapidly expanding, including the effective use of electronic tablets in Kindergarten and interactive whiteboards for senior students. The libraries and the science laboratories were well equipped and were used effectively to support the development of students' research and investigation skills.

[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	97	15%
	Last year	137	21%
Teachers	11		18%
Students	51		30%

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

A few parents responded to the survey, fewer than last year. Most parents were satisfied with the overall quality of education available at the school. As in the previous year, most parents agreed that their daughters were making good progress in the key subjects but this year only a majority agreed that progress was good in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. However, a minority of parents and students thought progress in Arabic as a second language was not as good. Most parents and students believed the school was a positive learning environment where both academic and personal needs were catered for. A minority of students thought the school did not always listen to their views. A few teachers answered the survey and they were very enthusiastic about their school.

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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