

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai American Academy

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai American Academy

Location	Al Barsha
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemsdaa-dubai.com
Telephone	04-3479222
Address	P.O Box 32762, Dubai, UAE
Principal	Robin Appleby
Curriculum	US/IB
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	2,260
Number of Emirati students	26 (1%)
Date of the inspection	Sunday 23rd to Thursday 27th October 2011

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The context of the school

The Dubai American Academy is situated in Al Barsha. The school opened in September 1998. Currently, the school has a total enrolment of 2,260 students, aged three to 18 years.

The school followed a US curriculum. Students were entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD) in Grades 11 to 12. There were 183 full-time teachers, including the superintendent and senior leadership team.

All teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications and were supported by 62 teaching assistants. Students were grouped in 112 classes; five to nine at each year group of the school from Kindergarten to Year 12. Twenty-six students, approximately one per cent of students, were Emirati. Ninety-seven different nationalities were represented among the student population.

At the time of the inspection, the Superintendent was in her fourth year and 29 teachers were newly appointed, some of which were additional positions to curriculum, Islamic Education and Arabic classes.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Outstanding

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The Dubai American Academy provided an outstanding quality of education; its strengths included attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science in all phases. The quality of teaching for effective learning was outstanding in Kindergarten, elementary and middle school. Strong teacher subject knowledge in almost all subjects permitted teachers to address, effectively, students' learning needs. The ethos of the school was outstanding, supported by the outstanding curriculum and the very effective quality of support.

Since the previous inspection, a number of initiatives had been introduced to improve the curriculum, specifically in Islamic Education and Arabic. Appropriate objectives had been developed and implemented to sustain improvement. However, progress was still inconsistent across all phases in Islamic Education and Arabic. The addition of subject co-ordinators and extra Islamic Education and Arabic teachers enhanced the

school's capacity to improve further. In the middle School, students' progress in Islamic Education and Arabic was enhanced by good teaching of Arabic, which was successfully included within the Modern Foreign Languages department.

Key strengths

- Students' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science were outstanding across all phases of the school;
- The quality of the English, mathematics and science curriculum was outstanding in all levels of the school;
- Assessment arrangements were outstanding;
- High quality protection and support of students was evident across the school;
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning was outstanding and addressed all aspects of the work of the school.

Recommendations

- Continue to raise the level of attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic, specifically in the high School;
- Further develop information and communication technology (ICT) integration across the curriculum;
- Continue to improve enquiry-based learning across all levels of the school.

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

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

Attainment was outstanding in English, mathematics and science across the school. In the International Baccalaureate examinations, physics was the weakest of the three sciences. Attainment in Arabic was acceptable in all phases. Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable in the elementary and high school and good in the middle school. The quality of recitation in the high school was a notable aspect requiring improvement.

Progress was outstanding across the school in English, mathematics and science. Progress in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable in the elementary and high school and good in the middle school. In Islamic Education, progress was acceptable in the elementary school, good in the middle school and acceptable in the high school. Muslim students' knowledge of Islam in some areas of learning was weak, primarily as a result of gaps in the knowledge of some of the teachers.

Overall, Emirati students' attainment and progress across all phases of the school mirrored that of the general school population. Almost all were meeting or exceeding expectations in Arabic for first language learners, mathematics and science. Exceptions were in Islamic Education in the middle school, where attainment and progress were at least good for most students but acceptable for a minority. In English, in Kindergarten and elementary, attainment and progress was good for most but acceptable for a few Emirati students.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding throughout the school. In all classes, students were extremely well behaved, polite and courteous. Student-teacher relationships were excellent. Almost all students attended school regularly and were punctual. Their understanding of Islam and local cultures was better in elementary and middle phases than in the rest of the school. The school provided students with a few opportunities to learn about Islam and local cultures. School events and extra-curricular activities provided students with limited opportunities to extend their understanding of Islam. Students' civic,

economic and environmental understanding was outstanding across all phases. Students were responsible and contributed actively to the life of the school. Strong student government played an important role across all sections of the school. Students participated in shared decision-making and took responsibility for planning activities and events. Students in all phases had developed a sound understanding of Dubai's economic developments and recent economic changes. They were also aware of global financial issues and the possible impact on Dubai and on their families.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

The quality of teaching was outstanding in Kindergarten, elementary and middle schools and good in high School. Almost all teachers had extensive knowledge of their subject matter and were skillful in structuring and implementing challenging and developmentally appropriate lessons, using up-to-date research-based strategies. Teachers demonstrated an excellent rapport with students; classrooms tended to be warm, friendly environments, and students often took responsibility for their own learning. Many students were enthusiastic and eager to share their viewpoints and knowledge. In the best classrooms, lessons were hands-on, teachers used enquiry and cross-curricular approaches to stimulate interest, and flexible grouping and learning centres were used for differentiation. Instructional technology was integrated into many lessons. However, most frequently this did not include highly interactive or hands-on instruction. Teaching assistants, resource teachers, and peer-tutoring at the Writing Centre provided extensive support to students.

The quality of learning was outstanding across most subjects and grades. In the most effective classes, students were curious, reflective, analytical and actively engaged in problem-solving, often in collaborative learning with peers. Students in IBD classes demonstrated significant understanding of concepts and were able to independently pursue in-depth projects as reflected in their student portfolios. In many classes,

students were very comfortable asking questions and sometimes led lively discussions. When instruction was more teacher-centred, students were less engaged. In such cases, a few students were not sufficiently challenged.

Assessment throughout all phases of the school was outstanding. The school used a wide variety of high-quality external examinations and internal assessment instruments. The use of scoring rubrics made assessment criteria clear to students and parents. Students were allowed to participate in self and peer-evaluation. The results from the various assessments were analysed and used to improve teaching and learning. Formative assessment was practised throughout the phases of the school, but sometimes teachers neglected to write suggestions for improvement in students' work.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

The curriculum throughout the school was outstanding. Curriculum documents were based on internationally relevant curriculum projects from North America, adapted to the needs of Dubai American Academy. The Islamic Education curriculum was based on approved Ministry of Education textbooks. On-going attention to curriculum development was ensured by a systematic five-year review cycle. Planning in each subject was planned from Kindergarten through to Grade 12 and ensured continuity across the school. An electronic curriculum management system had been adapted to the school's needs and was used effectively by all teachers. Curriculum documents at all levels showed depth, breadth and balance. Approaches to differentiation to meet the needs of all students were identified in daily lesson plans. The opportunities for enrichment both to complement and supplement the curriculum were outstanding. Teachers collaborated across the curriculum to enhance cross-curricular links.

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

Health and safety arrangements in the school were outstanding. Policies and procedures were firmly embedded. Students reported that they felt very safe and all staff fully understood their duty of care. School premises, equipment and resources were excellent and well suited to meet the educational needs of all students. Safety management in all areas of the school were of high standards. Transport arrangements, fire drills, evacuation procedures, medical tracking and checking, were exemplary. Medical staff was extremely vigilant. They gathered and shared relevant medical information appropriately to ensure students' medical care. Students' healthy food choices were evident throughout the school. Students knew about healthy diets and the benefits of exercise. Child protection policies were in place and procedures and practice were well developed.

The quality of support provided by the school was outstanding. Positive relationships existed between staff and students, exemplifying the school's culture of kindness. Standards for exemplary conduct were well developed, with expectations clearly understood by all students. Discipline issues were minor and were handled effectively by teachers, supervisors and administrators, when necessary. Eight experienced counsellors ensured that the academic and personal needs of all students were met. A well-developed tracking and monitoring system was in place to check students' progress and attainment. Students requiring special education services received outstanding guidance and support. This support was provided by qualified staff that teamed with nurses, counsellors, and outside agencies when appropriate, in order to provide the highest level of special education services. Support for students' learning through English as an additional language was delivered both in and out of the mainstream class. Extra learning support was provided by teaching assistants in many classrooms. Management of attendance and punctuality was effective.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

The outstanding leadership focused on all aspects of school improvement. The leadership team demonstrated a very high degree of professional preparation and knowledge and used the same to research and examine all available data to improve the curriculum, teaching and learning within the school. Senior leaders used a highly effective distributive leadership model to develop an effective school vision. The caring, secure climate that permeated the school began in the individual offices of the senior leadership and was clearly visible in each of the school levels. The Superintendent had a thorough knowledge of all aspects of the school and its supporting operations.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was outstanding. Improvement planning had addressed all recommendations from the previous report in a systematic and thorough manner. Highly effective strategies were in place and involved all members of the school staff. However, further work was still needed in Islamic Education and Arabic to bring these subjects to the standards achieved in the other key subjects. The action plan and strategies were stated clearly and shared with all staff and based on thorough analysis of data. Self-evaluation had resulted in significant improvements to the curriculum.

Partnerships with parents and community were outstanding. Parents were very satisfied with all aspects of the work of the school and particularly positive about the teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science. There were effective systems for enabling parents to communicate with school staff. Successful links existed between the school, parents and wider community. Seminars were held frequently to assist parents in supporting their children's learning at home.

Governance was good. The Board of Governors had a positive influence on the school, conducting regular meetings with senior leaders to review action plans and areas of mutual concern. The governors provided high quality professional development programmes to address needs of the staff. The governing board held the school accountable for outcomes.

Management of the school was outstanding. Highly effective procedures and routines supported the management of the school. All staff were appropriately qualified and supported in a positive, professional learning environment. Staff turnover was low and a number of additional staff effectively complemented the instructional and managerial aspects of the school. The school was safe, clean and modern, and maintained to a high standard. Libraries were well stocked and computer laboratories were well equipped and maintained.

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	312	21%
	Last year	294	20%
Teachers	85		48%
Students	50		12%

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

A significant minority of parents responded to the survey, slightly more than last year. Parents were generally satisfied with the quality of education available at the school. Parents believed that their children were making good progress in English, mathematics and science, but a few indicated that progress was less than good in Islamic Education and Arabic. Parents' views of school provision were positive on all aspects, as were those of teachers and students. Most parents indicated that they were involved in the life of the school. A majority of parents and teachers believed that inspection had led to improvements at the 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

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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