

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Mawakeb School - Branch

Report published in April 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Mawakeb School - Branch

Location	Al Barsha 1
Type of school	Private
Website	www.almawakeb.sch.ae
Telephone	04-3478288
Address	P O Box 35001, Dubai
Principal	Naziha Nasr
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18/ Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	2683
Largest nationality group of students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	700 (26%)
Date of the inspection	17th to 20th March 2014

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The context of the school

This campus of Al Mawakeb School is situated in Al Barsha 1. At the time of inspection, there were 2683 students on roll, 491 of whom were new to the school. This represented a small increase from the previous academic year. The school had a cosmopolitan population, with 66 nationalities represented. Most students were from Middle Eastern Arab countries. Twenty six per cent (700) of the students were Emiratis. Iranian and US students accounted for roughly five per cent each.

The school offered a modified US curriculum, plus Ministry of Education (MoE) Islamic Education and Arabic curricula. In the Kindergarten, children were taught through the medium of French, with additional Arabic and English lessons. In the rest of the school, the curriculum was delivered in English, with Arabic and French as separate subjects. At Grades 5 to 12, boys and girls were segregated for all lessons. The school had identified 48 students as having a special educational need. Grade 12 students participated in SAT tests.

At the time of inspection, the school had 147 teachers. Around 20 per cent had been appointed since September 2013. Almost all teachers had a first degree or an appropriate academic qualification. There were 21 teaching assistants who supported teachers in the Kindergarten.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language in the elementary phase;
- Attainment and progress in English in the Kindergarten;
- Progress in middle and high school mathematics and science;
- The personal responsibility, provision for health and safety and quality of support in all phases of the school;
- The partnerships with parents and the day-to-day management of the school.

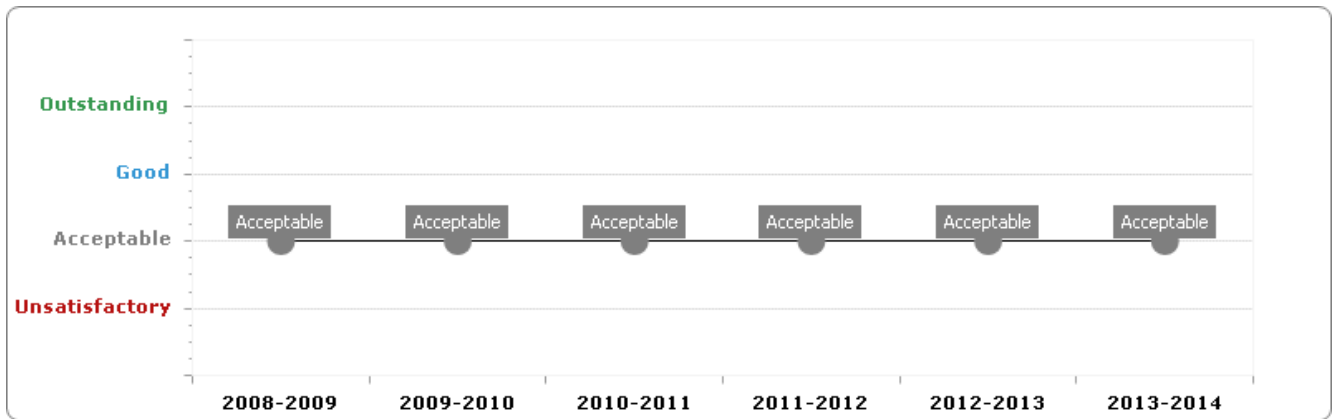
Recommendations

- Improve opportunities for Kindergarten children and elementary students to develop their learning skills by providing more activities that allow for independent learning, collaboration, research, problem solving and real life connections;
- Ensure that all teachers promote effective learning through better questioning, dialogue and additional teaching strategies to meet the needs of all groups of students;
- Make more effective use of assessment by setting achievable individual learning targets, using Common Core standards for English and mathematics and aligning science to the standards adopted by a specific US state;
- Use externally validated assessments to moderate the school's own assessments and to give staff, the students and their parents, a realistic view of students' attainment in an international context.
- Improve the quality of provision for students with special educational needs by improving staff training, using individual educational plans effectively, tracking progress and modifying the curriculum to match individual learning and personal needs;
- Improve Kindergarten provision by reducing class sizes, using available time more effectively and using assessment better to establish rates of children's progress and inform planning.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school had met all MoE requirements fully;
- Improved self-evaluation and improvement planning;
- Improved quality of support across all phases

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	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	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	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	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in most subjects across the school was mostly acceptable. It was good in Elementary Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. It was also good in Arabic as an additional language across the school, and in Kindergarten English and mathematics. In Islamic Education, most students knew about key Pillars of Islam such as praying and Hajj. They knew some Islamic behaviours and examples from Al Sunnah and related them to modern life. Qur'an recitation and knowledge of Islamic rulings for older students were weaker. In Arabic as a first language, the majority of elementary students had good listening and speaking skills. However, only a minority of students in the middle and high school phases had well developed extended speaking and writing skills. In Arabic as an additional language, the majority of students had secure listening skills and were familiar with a wide range of vocabulary. Students' independent writing was less well developed. In English, students' oral and listening skills developed rapidly, with the majority of older students becoming assured speakers. Students were competent readers but their writing skills failed to reach age-related expectations. In mathematics, a majority of children in Kindergarten were above expectations in their calculation and recording of answers. In other phases, most students used techniques in algebra, geometry, statistics and, where relevant, calculus. In all phases in science, students had acceptable factual knowledge and competently carried out practical work following detailed instructions. Their understanding of the processes of science, including controlled testing and planning of short practical investigations, was underdeveloped.

Progress in all key subjects was mostly acceptable. Progress was good in elementary and high school Islamic Education, elementary Arabic as a first language, kindergarten English, and middle and high school mathematics and science. In Islamic Education, elementary students made good progress in learning about key principles of Islam, and about Halal and Haram. Most students were developing their understanding of links between Al Seeraha and modern issues. Progress in Qur'an recitation was limited for a significant proportion of students. In Arabic as a first language, the majority of students made good progress developing speaking and reading skills. Middle and high school students also progressed well in acquiring grammar. Progress in writing was adequate in Elementary while, in Middle and High, progress was significantly slower. In Arabic as an additional language, most students made adequate progress in learning and applying simple grammar rules and an acceptable range of vocabulary. Students were developing their abilities to use simple oral phrases and expressions while progress in writing was limited. In English, students made steady progress in the acquisition of speaking and listening skills especially in the elementary and middle school phases but progress was less strong in the high school phase. In mathematics in the Kindergarten and elementary phase progress in acquiring techniques, for example in calculations or in algebraic

manipulation, was better than the development of their critical thinking skills. In science, students increased their knowledge of scientific topics and their confidence in using terminology as they moved up the school. In all phases, students made slow progress in developing basic scientific concepts.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were good in Middle and High but acceptable in Kindergarten and Elementary. The level of engagement and attitudes to learning were strengths across all phases. In Middle and High, opportunities to collaborate and enquire were common features in science investigations and research, and in mathematics when learning algebra. In Kindergarten and Elementary, students rarely worked without teacher direction and had limited opportunities to find things out for themselves. There were a few opportunities where students were able to apply critical thinking skills to improve their learning and progress. These mainly occurred as a result of teacher questioning or peer assessment, and were not consistently developed across the school. Consequently, students were not always aware of their strengths or how to improve their learning. Connections to real-life contexts seldom occurred. In the few subjects where they did, they were usually superficial and did not deepen learning or understanding.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility was good in all phases. Students were caring, friendly and courteous to others and behaved positively in class and around the school. Relationships with staff were strong, cordial and mutually respectful. In all phases, displays of student work showed good understanding of health-related issues such as keeping fit, healthy eating and the symptoms and prevention of diabetes. Attendance for the last full term was good in Kindergarten and outstanding elsewhere. A small minority of students were not punctual to lessons, particularly at the beginning of the day.

Students had an acceptable understanding of the influences Islamic values have on contemporary society in Kindergarten, Elementary and Middle. This understanding was good in High. Most students had a basic level of awareness of the heritage and culture of the UAE that underpin and influence the contemporary life in Dubai. Students had appropriate knowledge of their own culture but, apart from those in High School, there was limited awareness and understanding of other cultures.

Students' community and environmental responsibility was good in High School and was acceptable elsewhere. Most students understood their responsibilities to the school community and a majority of final

year students initiated and led student clubs. The extended student council had a developing voice. Students understood the link between effort and success, and were positive in working towards personal goals. They took responsibility for the school environment and a majority of older students had a good understanding of environmental issues. Most students supported fund raising and environmental initiatives such as the 'Save Water' campaign but few were actively involved in in-school schemes to support conservation.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was acceptable in the Kindergarten, Elementary and High Schools. It was good in the Middle School, where teachers implemented good practice more consistently. Most teachers had a well-developed knowledge of the subjects they taught, but only an acceptable understanding of how to promote learning. Their lesson plans were, on the whole, well thought out and often took account of high, medium and low attaining students. The approaches of teachers in Kindergarten did not always address the needs of individual children and the matching of tasks and materials to meet the needs of different groups was not accurate enough. At the beginning of lessons, teachers generally shared with students what they were going to learn. Teachers used information and communication technology (ICT) and other resources to enhance their explanations and were increasingly using questions skilfully to assess students' progress. The development of dialogue with students to encourage critical thinking skills was variable, as was the promotion of independent learning.

The quality of assessment was acceptable in all phases. At the end of each unit of activity, teachers in Kindergarten used discussion with groups of children to assess progress and attainment. These assessments were not moderated to ensure consistency, and did not accurately show progress. In other phases, teachers used a combination of assessment information such as internal tests and examinations, to monitor students' attainment in key subjects. In some subjects, however, ineffective use of this assessment information had led to teachers over-inflating students' marks and grades compared with international benchmark standards. As a result, teachers had built an unrealistic picture of students' actual strengths and weaknesses. Only a few teachers gave helpful written feedback to students on what they needed to do to improve their work. Many teachers accepted, without comment, untidy and badly organised written work from students. Self and peer assessment among students was developing in a few science lessons, but seldom used elsewhere. Teachers were beginning to use assessment results to alter their approaches to teaching and support for individual students.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good in Kindergarten but acceptable in other phases. It was carefully and intentionally planned, and was moving toward alignment with the US Common Core standards. Most students were well prepared for the next stage of education within the school and beyond. Test results, teacher feedback and classroom observations were used for the annual curriculum review, undertaken to meet, more closely, students' academic needs. Rigorous review was required of all aspects of the Kindergarten curriculum to improve alignment to international best practice. A limited range of courses reduced potentially rich cross-content opportunities. Extra-curricular and cross-curricular links did not always effectively enhance independent learning, research or critical thinking. Some enrichment activities were provided through in-class programmes such as SAT Corner in mathematics, and via community-based events. The school was complied with MoE requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic.

The design of the curriculum was acceptable across all phases. The curriculum was modified to meet the needs of new French, Arabic and English language learners and additional classes after school assisted science and mathematics students. The school had made some improvements in making adjustments for students with special educational needs and had a small number of teachers able to use effective methods. Nevertheless, modifications were not matched closely enough to the needs of students and sometimes restricted the relevance and meaning of learning. The curriculum did not allow students choice in the subjects they studied, particularly students in High School.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The arrangements for health and safety were good across all phases. Routine systems were in place to address health and safety issues. Procedures for security, transport and monitoring of visitors were well planned. However, a number of safety issues required attention. There was limited staff presence and traffic control at the afternoon dismissal area for boys, and some safety appliances were absent from science laboratories. Fire drills were conducted annually. Buildings were aesthetically pleasing, clean, and well maintained. Four school clinics served the student body in a thorough and efficient manner. Students' work regarding healthy living was prominently displayed and appropriate food choices were emphasized, especially in lower grades. The canteen offered healthy food choices and posted nutrition information on all items for sale. A comprehensive child protection policy was in effect and staff members were aware of the protocols.

The quality of support was good across all phases. Students were courteous and behaved well. Relationships throughout the school were respectful and friendly. Arrangements for the management of attendance were effective but procedures to manage repeated poor punctuality were not effective enough. The school had improved its ability to identify students with special educational needs. Teachers were beginning to use the KHDA categories in classifying students' needs more effectively although there was still scope for more rigour and accuracy in their approach. Gifted and talented students had opportunities for leadership. Heads of section monitored students' welfare and progress. They conducted regular meetings enabling teachers to share information about students. A counsellor provided specialised support where needed. Older students received useful careers advice and a programme of support helped students make appropriate decisions about university applications.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. The school had revised and articulated its vision and direction, which were firmly focused on improving the student learning ethos. The principal and vice principal had an increased clarity of what was required to achieve this vision, but not all teachers or students had the same understanding and not all had fully embraced it. Leaders had improved communication to all stakeholders and vigorously pursued an agenda of change. They had provided significant targeted professional development to staff and had achieved modest gains in a relatively short time. There were ambitious plans to strengthen the schools' middle leadership. The school had broadened the voice of students and parents with additional consultation, which was beginning to impact on the work of the school. The school appreciated the benefits of external evaluation and managed the process professionally.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The processes had been strengthened by increased input and analysis of evidence from all subject leaders. This had resulted in a more secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, although the views of parents, students and the board were not systematically incorporated. Evaluation occasionally suffered from inaccurate data and invalid interpretation resulting in inflated views of the school's position. Effective performance management arrangements helped guide the teacher development programme. The school's improvement plan was complemented by individual subject department plans. These were beginning to provide a more solid direction for the school's improvement journey. The school had not reviewed the daily kindergarten routines and curriculum, and had not aligned provision with internationally recognised early childhood best practice.

The partnerships with parents and the community were good. A positive partnership with parents was valued and continual efforts were made to engage parents in their children's education. A wide range of strategies, including technology, were used to establish channels of communication and keep parents informed about their children's academic achievements, as well as the day-to-day events taking place in the school. Formal written reports to parents were regular but did not provide sufficient information on the next steps for their children's learning. The marks presented were often not aligned to international benchmark standards. Long-standing links with external organisations provided important links within Dubai. Connections influenced fund raising, extra-curricular and enrichment activities across the school community. There were restricted opportunities for inter-school exchanges.

Governance was acceptable. The Governing Board held the school to account and had been instrumental in supporting the leadership team's new vision and improvement strategies. Board members had a strong knowledge of the daily operations of the school and its community through frequent visits. Governors had introduced a brief parental survey which provided a small amount of information. Strong informal communication channels existed between Governors and the local community, but there were insufficient opportunities for the wider parental body to have their concerns heard. This was due to a lack of formal routes and a restricted number of governors. The Board had ensured that the school was compliant with the KHDA curriculum requirements but had allowed Kindergarten class numbers to exceed, significantly, the KHDA recommended numbers. This restricted learning opportunities. The Board continued to support the school's development by providing a range of additional resources.

Management including staffing, facilities and resources was good. Lessons and activities were generally efficiently organised to make effective use of the spacious and well-maintained site. The school community utilised these facilities to offer a range of additional clubs and interest groups. Classroom and corridor displays included examples of students' work and celebrated the specific gifts and talents of individuals. Sufficiently qualified staff were recruited, inducted and deployed to make best use of their experience and expertise. Additional resources such as interactive white boards had been provided. The library was spacious but was not an attractive, inviting place for research or reading for pleasure.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

There were 700 Emirati students on the roll, about a quarter of the school's population. Their attainment and progress were broadly acceptable across all phases with strengths in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language where their progress was generally good. In international testing, the overall attainment of Emirati students was below that of their peers with the performance of girls being noticeably stronger than boys. Emirati students had similar qualities of personal responsibility to their peers. Overall, they were mature and sensible in their actions in all parts of the school. The school had strong relationships with Emirati parents. Communication between heads of department, supervisors and parents had been strengthened and many parents had effective links with the Emirati governors. Attendance levels were high, although not all students met the school's expectations for punctuality. The tracking of Emirati students' progress was in its early stages of development. Reports to parents were regular and generally informative, but students' marks were not aligned to international benchmark standards. Parents reported that their children had had success when moving to tertiary education. Improved opportunities for student leadership had been initiated through the active school council, and their voice was beginning to be heard by the school leaders through regular formal meetings. About a quarter of all school clubs were led by senior Emirati students. There was strong Emirati representation on the governing board.

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

Overall, the quality of provision for students with special educational needs was acceptable but it varied across different phases and departments. The school had achieved some key milestones on its journey of improved provision. Identification processes were now in place and attempts had been made to use KHDA categories to classify students' needs. Most teachers now made some curriculum adjustments to promote learning and a minority were effectively meeting the needs of students. However, often modifications were not matched closely enough to the specific needs of students and sometimes did not clarify the relevance and meaning of learning. This restricted progress. A new special educational needs team carried out some monitoring of the progress of students. However, a lack of practical experience and specialist training had restricted their impact. There had been some development and use of individual support plans, but overall their use was still in its infancy and the quality of specialist support for students and guidance for staff remained limited.

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

The quality of teaching in Arabic as a first language was improving across the school. Almost all teachers had secure subject knowledge and achieved appropriate levels of interaction with students in most lessons. Teachers in Elementary had a strong knowledge of how students learn and their lessons were engaging and often resulted in improvement in language skills of reading and speaking. In a majority of lessons in this phase, students were able to apply their learning in meaningful contexts. In Middle and Secondary, lesson planning did not always address the language needs of students effectively. Although different work was frequently provided to different groups of students, this rarely led to significant linguistic development. Teaching strategies were not always modified to address the different learning styles and needs of students, particularly in the High School. Teachers' expectations were sometimes modest and resulted in slower progress over time.

The school curriculum fulfilled KHDA requirements. The school implemented a number of initiatives, such as poetry competitions, in order to enrich its curriculum. The curriculum for the subject was regularly reviewed and acceptable plans were created. However, this was strictly focused on the coverage of content of textbooks rather than addressing the weaknesses and gaps in students' learning and skills, particularly in speaking 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	374	25%
	Last year	463	31%
Teachers	91		63%
Students	415		85%

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

A minority of parents, but a majority of teachers and most students completed their surveys this year, a similar percentage to last year. Most parents were satisfied that their children were making good progress in English, mathematics and science and received a good quality education. Most felt their children enjoyed being at school and were looked after well and kept safe while they were there. Most felt that the school was led well but only a small majority felt that the school leaders listened to their opinions. A majority of students felt that they were making good progress in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science, but almost a fifth felt that they were not making such progress in Arabic as a first language. Almost half felt that they had many opportunities to take part in interesting and stimulating work involving critical thinking, problem solving and independent activities. However, just over one fifth of students did not agree. Just over half also felt that most of their teachers were skilled and well qualified. Less than half of the students considered that students were well behaved at school. A similar proportion felt that they could choose from a range of subjects or activities but even less felt that the curriculum was modified to meet their learning needs. About one quarter did not think the school dealt well with incidents of bullying. Teachers were generally satisfied with almost all aspects of the school provision and its operations.

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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