

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Diyafah High School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Diyafah High School

Location	Al Qusais
Type of school	Private
Website	www.diyafah.com
Telephone	04-2671115
Address	PO Box 24023, Al Qusais, Dubai
Principal	Mrs. Joyce Rufus
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Foundation Stage to Year 13
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1,445
Number of Emirati students	Less than 1%
Date of the inspection	Monday 27th February to Thursday 1st March 2012

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The context of the school

Al Diyafah High School is situated in Al Qusais. The school was opened in 1982 and has been on the present site since 2002. At the time of the inspection, the school had a total of 1,445 students, aged from three to 18 years. Students represented over 29 different nationalities; a very few students were Emirati. Ten students had been identified by the school as having special educational needs and were supported by individual education plans. The school offered a modified English curriculum and, by Years 10 and 11, students sat International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examinations and Advanced/Subsidiary Level examinations at the post-16 phase. There were 120 full-time teachers and one part-time teacher supported by ten classroom assistants. All teachers were appropriately qualified. Students were arranged into four stages from Foundation Stage to post-16. There was a single class in Year 13, three classes in both Foundation Stage 1 and Year 12, with four classes at each stage from Foundation Stage 2 through to Year 11. At the time of inspection, the Principal had been in her post for three years.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The school provided a good quality of education within a caring and inclusive learning environment. The school had maintained or improved the quality of education for its students. As a result, primary students for whom Arabic was an additional language were making good progress in their learning. Post-16 students' understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture, as well as their civic, economic and environmental understanding, were outstanding. Almost all students had very positive attitudes toward learning. They had responded well to the increased quality of teaching and were setting targets for their own academic improvement. However, the variation in attendance across the school continued to constrain learning.

The school had responded well to the recommendations in the previous inspection report, including improvements in teaching, learning and developing the role of parents in supporting the Board of Governors. The curriculum had a greater focus on teamwork and problem-solving skills through recently introduced enrichment programmes. In addition, increased course options were offered to senior students.

The Principal continued to successfully lead change and develop the leadership capacities of almost all staff members in all stages of the school.

Key strengths

- The good progress of primary students in all key subjects and the good attainment and progress in mathematics and science across the entire school;
- The good personal and social development of students of all ages, including some outstanding aspects amongst the older students;
- The consistently good curriculum, teaching and learning across the whole school;
- The outstanding provision made for students' health and safety;
- The good leadership and improvement planning.

Recommendations

- Improve the attainment of students in Islamic Education in the secondary and post-16 phases and in Arabic for first language learners in the secondary and post-16 phases;
- Teach to promote the development of students' higher order thinking skills across the school;
- Use assessment information more consistently to inform support strategies for all students in their classrooms;
- Build upon best practices to provide more information for students and their parents on how to improve learning.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Acceptable
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	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good

Students' attainment was good across the school in mathematics and science. It was good in the Foundation, primary and secondary stages in English but was only acceptable at post-16. While students attained good levels in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language in the primary stage, attainment was only acceptable in the secondary and post-16 stages. Attainment was acceptable in Arabic as an additional language in both the primary and secondary stages where the subject was studied. Most primary and almost all secondary students showed good understanding of Islamic concepts and recitation skills. Listening skills were the most developed in the Arabic subjects but students did not speak using Standard Arabic. English language skills were strongest in speaking for audiences and writing for different purposes. Across the subjects, with the exception of mathematics, the attainment of girls was slightly better than that of the boys in the secondary stage.

Foundation Stage children's progress was good in the three key subjects studied. Progress was also good by the last year of the primary stage in all five core subjects. Students were making good progress in the secondary and post-16 stages in mathematics and science and in the secondary phase in English. Students were only making acceptable progress in Islamic Education and Arabic in both the secondary and post-16 phases and in English by post-16. Students with special educational needs were making progress in line with that of their peers. While progress was good in mathematics, students' practical problem-solving skills were underdeveloped, as were their abilities to discuss how mathematics might be applied in real life contexts. Students' progress in science was variable in Year 12, reflecting their wide ability range.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good across the school. They had very good relationships with each other and with almost all teachers. Almost all students were highly motivated to learn and understood the importance of healthy living. However, their attendance across the four phases was only acceptable. Students' understanding of Islam and their appreciation of local traditions and culture were good at the Foundation, primary and secondary stages. These were outstanding at the post-16 phase, where students had mature understanding of how the multicultural nature of the UAE could enrich their lives. Similarly, students in the first three phases showed good civic, economic and environmental understanding and, by post-16, this was outstanding. Students took considerable responsibilities in school life, especially relating to discipline and the environment. They had a strong voice through the Student Council, helping to identify school priorities. Students took good care of the local environment and participated in a variety of activities to raise awareness and clean up the community. Students' knowledge of Dubai's economic development was strong, particularly amongst the oldest.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The quality of teaching was good in all phases of the school. Almost all teachers had good subject knowledge, prepared their lessons well and used direct and closed questioning techniques effectively. Learning objectives were shared with students although, on occasion, they were too general. The majority of teachers reviewed what had been taught in previous lessons, identified previous knowledge and built upon on it for current learning. Almost all teachers created successful working relationships with their students, showing respect and valuing their efforts. Resources were used effectively to enhance learning, particularly in the Foundation Stage, although students' use of information and communication technology (ICT) was limited. Teachers were highly committed to their students' success, but a few did not have high enough expectations of them. Almost all teachers created positive learning environments; however, too few teachers gave students sufficient time for reflection or to think deeply.

The quality of students' learning was good. Students were keen to learn and participated fully in lessons and extra activities. Students were able to work independently to age-appropriate degrees. When the opportunities were given, they were able to work well in groups and pairs, cooperate and share ideas and materials. They listened to their teachers and were motivated, often making connections to their previous work. When allowed, students chose the best ways to complete tasks, leading and supporting their peers. Students were able to apply their skills successfully to problems reflecting real-life situations in most subjects. Students demonstrated proficiency in finding new information, independence of thought and presentation of learning, all done with impressive maturity.

The assessment of learning was of acceptable quality. The school had developed a system to gather data, particularly from school tests, and had a wide range of information on students' progress. This information allowed teachers to track and record students' progress over time. They identified those students who were finding difficulty or were making very good progress. While most teachers were effective in evaluating students' understanding through skilled questioning, they did not make best use of attainment information to plan challenging activities. The majority of students were aware of some of their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers regularly marked students' work and some students set individual targets for improvement. However, teachers did not provide students with sufficient written advice to help them understand how to improve.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good

The curriculum was of good quality in all four phases, and it reflected the school's mission. The Foundation Stage curriculum covered all areas of learning and allowed children to develop communication, language and literacy as well as numeracy and personal and social skills. In the primary and secondary phases, there was a broad range of subjects on offer that gave students opportunities to learn in many ways. The curriculum was balanced throughout the weekly timetable and included enrichment activities that stimulated students' artistic and aesthetic sensibilities. There was good progression year on year and at points of transition between phases. Curriculum review procedures were thorough and included consultation of all stakeholders. There were important modifications for students with special educational needs. The post-16 curriculum had been broadened and enriched by the addition of three subjects and co-curricular activities to challenge students further outside of classrooms. In a few lessons, the level of challenge in the curriculum was too low for students of high ability.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	Good

The arrangements for the health and safety of students were outstanding. The school's effective systems included detailed records and rigorous procedures. The building was very well maintained and fire prevention and evacuation procedures were well established. The medical clinic was well organised and equipped to deal with any potential emergency. There were very clear transport arrangements which were followed consistently by all staff members. As a result, students who used the buses were very well supported and kept safe as they travelled to and from school. The importance of healthy living was reinforced across the school and was well supported by nurses and the doctor. This included a very successful programme to support overweight students. Staff members were very well informed about child protection policies and procedures.

The school's support for students was good. Relationships between the staff and students were very positive and student care was very effective. This included school-wide systems to ensure that students' personal needs were being met. There were clear procedures to manage behaviour. However, instances were observed of students not focusing sufficiently on their class work due to their teachers' weak behaviour management skills. Only a few students had been identified formally as having special educational needs. Well-constructed individual education plans were shared with their parents and helped target the support for students' needs. Consequently, those students made good progress. The school had begun to identify a wider range of students' needs and so the more able and talented students were being given better support. There were systems to check attendance and punctuality but they had yet to raise student attendance. Almost all students arrived punctually to their lessons.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

Leadership of the school was good and improving. The Principal had a vision of the school's potential and developed the capacity of her staff to realise it. She directed the staff to lead change; at almost all levels of the school, this resulted in improved teaching and better student attainment and progress. A distributive leadership approach helped to identify areas for improvement while ensuring effective implementation of the previously planned changes. These included the increased involvement of students in the school's decision-making processes. Relations among leaders were positive and communication was good. The school's leaders collectively demonstrated the capacity to make further improvements.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school had developed rigorous and systematic approaches to gathering information across a wide range of school activities. This included gathering the views of students and parents through annual questionnaires, allowing them to comment on the quality of teaching and learning. School improvement plans were detailed, practical and regularly evaluated. As a result, very good progress had been made on achieving the recommendations of the last inspection report.

Partnership with parents and the wider community was good. It included regular and effective two way communication. The Parent Council had benefited from increased membership and parental involvement in school life, both social and educational, resulting in growing support for students' learning. Reports to parents were produced regularly and had a good amount of detail about students' attainment and progress. Community involvement had been enriched through senior students benefiting from 'world of work' experiences. There was a strong sense of environmental responsibility across the four phases of the school.

Governance of the school was good. Parental input on the governing body's Advisory Board had increased and was helping to support and challenge the school. This included wider representation of professional

members, parents and teaching staff. Parents received feedback from the governing body on its work through regular e-mails and other forms of school communication. However, they did not benefit from a summary of the work of the Advisory Board that included its monitoring of overall school improvement.

The management of the school, including staffing, facilities and resources, was acceptable. Almost all managers carried out their tasks well. Teachers were suitably qualified for their jobs. A well-developed performance management system linked individual teachers' targets for improvement to professional development activities. Improvements had been made to the range of English language reading books, ICT provision and external sports facilities. There remained constraints on facilities, with a lack of shade in the outside sports areas, limited areas for prayer and restrictions on teaching space, particularly in music. Resources for learning were of varied quality.

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	533	53%
	Last year	646	58%
Teachers	92		76%
Students	85		54%

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

About half of the parents responded to the survey, a slightly lower rate than last year. Most teachers and about half of the senior students responded to their surveys. Almost all parents and teachers were satisfied with the quality of education in the school and thought it was well led. Most students were also happy with their education. Most students thought that they were treated fairly. Almost all felt safe in the school, most enjoyed being there and a majority enjoyed their lessons. However, less than half of the students thought that school leaders listened to their opinions and 25 per cent did not feel they had an adult at school they could trust and could talk to. Most parents found school reports helpful and a majority

of students thought they were effective in helping them improve. Less than half of the students thought that they had a good range of subject choices and just over one third thought they could join a suitable range of clubs and activities. Almost all teachers were happy with their opportunities for staff development and thought that they were encouraged to contribute positively to school improvement.

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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