

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Al Salam Private School

Report published in April 2013

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Salam Private School

|                                       |                                 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Location                              | Al Nahda                        |
| Type of school                        | Private                         |
| Website                               | www.alsalamschool.sch.ae        |
| Telephone                             | 04-2679594                      |
| Address                               | PO. Box 5251, Al Nahda 2        |
| Principal                             | Susan Patricia Johnston         |
| Curriculum                            | UK                              |
| Gender of students                    | Boys and Girls                  |
| Age / Grades or Year Groups           | 3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12 |
| Attendance                            | Good                            |
| Number of students on roll            | 1,114                           |
| Largest nationality group of Students | Arabic                          |
| Number of Emirati students            | 246 (22%)                       |
| Date of the inspection                | 19th to 22nd November 2012      |

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## The context of the school

Al Salam School is situated in Al Nahda. The school opened in September 1988 and, at the time of the inspection, had 1,114 boys and girls on roll, aged three to 18 years. The school consisted of almost 45 different nationalities with approximately half of the students studying Arabic as a first language. Approximately 22 per cent of the students were Emiratis. The school curriculum was split into four phases covering Foundation Stage (Foundation Stage 1 and 2), primary (Years 1 to 6), secondary (Years 7 to 11) and post-16 (Years 12 and 13).

The school followed a published international primary curriculum. Students were entered for the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) at the end of the secondary phase and Advanced level examinations at the end of the post-16 phase.

At the time of the inspection, there were 70 teachers in the school. All were well qualified and suitably experienced. Teachers were supported by 46 teaching assistants. Staff turnover was low and there was a good balance of experienced and new staff in the school. The Principal was in her 25th year at the school.

## Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

### Key strengths

- The good attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a second language;
- Students' positive attitudes, behaviour, cultural awareness and understanding of Islamic values;
- The outstanding provision for health and safety across the school;
- The outstanding support for students, including those with special educational needs;
- The dedicated leadership of the Principal supported well by senior and middle leaders.

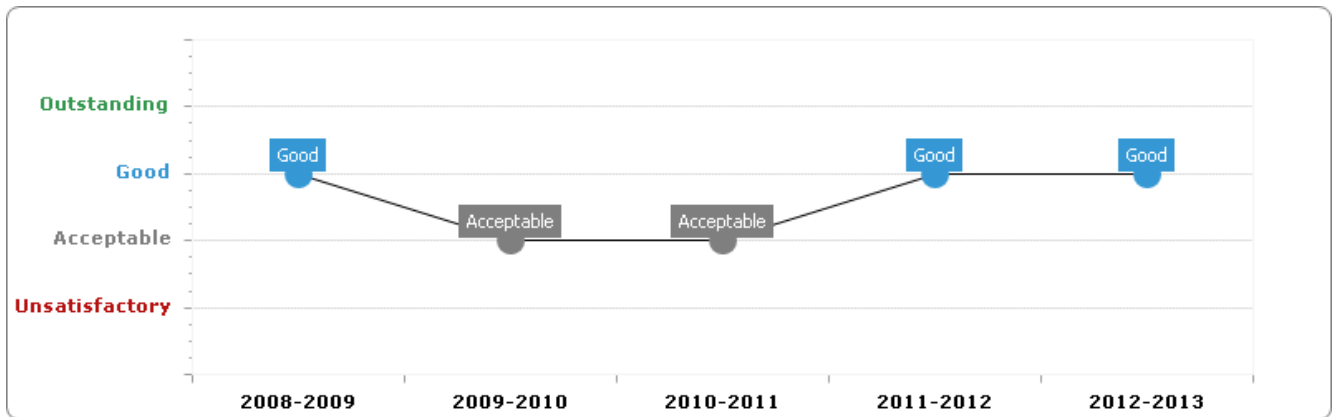
### Recommendations

- Improve attainment in English, mathematics and science in Foundation Stage and mathematics in the primary phase;
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teaching caters for the individual learning needs of all students in the class;
- Improve assessment by:
  - setting individual student targets based on levels of attainment to assist in measuring progress;
  - improve marking in books, so that students can identify their next steps in learning;
- Ensure compliance with the Ministry of Education requirements for Arabic teaching time in Years 1 to 3 and 9 to 11.

## Progress since the last inspection

- Improvements in the progress of students in the Foundation and primary phases;
- Additional time for literacy and the successful introduction of phonics in Foundation Stage;
- A greater focus on experimental and investigative work especially in science and mathematics;
- The introduction of an assessment tracker and the development of student self-assessment;
- The greater use of technology including classroom projectors, laptops and wireless internet.

## Trend of overall performance



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

|   | Foundation Stage | Primary    | Secondary  | Post-16        |
|---|------------------|------------|------------|----------------|
| <b>Islamic Education</b>                |                  |            |            |                |
| <b>Attainment</b>                       | Not Applicable   | Good       | Good       | Good           |
| <b>Progress</b>                         | Not Applicable   | Good       | Good       | Good           |
| <b>Arabic as a first language</b>       |                  |            |            |                |
| <b>Attainment</b>                       | Not Applicable   | Good       | Good       | Good           |
| <b>Progress</b>                         | Not Applicable   | Good       | Acceptable | Good           |
| <b>Arabic as an additional language</b> |                  |            |            |                |
| <b>Attainment</b>                       | Not Applicable   | Good       | Good       | Not Applicable |
| <b>Progress</b>                         | Not Applicable   | Good       | Good       | Not Applicable |
| <b>English</b>                          |                  |            |            |                |
| <b>Attainment</b>                       | Acceptable       | Good       | Good       | Good           |
| <b>Progress</b>                         | Good             | Good       | Good       | Good           |
| <b>Mathematics</b>                      |                  |            |            |                |
| <b>Attainment</b>                       | Acceptable       | Acceptable | Good       | Good           |
| <b>Progress</b>                         | Good             | Good       | Good       | Good           |
| <b>Science</b>                          |                  |            |            |                |
| <b>Attainment</b>                       | Acceptable       | Good       | Good       | Good           |
| <b>Progress</b>                         | Good             | Good       | Good       | Good           |

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

|  | Foundation Stage | Primary     | Secondary   | Post-16     |
|--|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 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                               | Good             | Good        | Good        | Good        |

[Read paragraph](#)

## 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 | Good      | Good    |

[Read paragraph](#)



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## 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 | 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              | Good         |
| Governance   | Good         |
| Management, including staffing, facilities and resources | Good         |

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment was good in most key subjects, across all phases. Almost all students had a good knowledge of Islam and concepts such as the pillars of Islam. Most could understand and discuss the values of Islam from the Qur'an, giving examples of how these were used in their own lives. In Arabic, they had good listening skills while extended writing was less well developed. In English, older students demonstrated effective speaking skills, read age-appropriate texts fluently and wrote extended passages covering a range of genre. In mathematics, they could accurately carry out challenging calculations using a calculator making use of their knowledge of the order of operations. Attainment was strongest in the secondary and post-16 phases, particularly in Year 11 with outstanding examination results in English, mathematics and science.

Progress was good in most subjects across all phases. Students made good progress in Islamic Education in their knowledge of concepts such as faith and charity. They developed good listening skills in Arabic but their progress was significantly slower in developing their extended writing skills. Students learned to write single letters and read simple words in Foundation Stage and, by the end of the secondary phase, they read and analysed literary works with confidence. By the end of Foundation Stage, most children had made rapid progress in acquiring mathematical vocabulary and understanding mathematical concepts. In the primary phase, progress was variable in mathematics because students were not always challenged sufficiently, although progress was better in the secondary phase so that, by Year 11, almost all students were attaining above expected international levels. In science, primary students made less progress where the challenge set by teachers was too low. Secondary and post-16 students made better progress when new learning was built on secure prior understanding

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Representing 22 per cent of the school, Emirati boys and girls were present in all phases of the school. Emirati student attainment was variable across all key stages. From a lower starting point, compared to their peers in English, mathematics and science, they made good progress as they moved up the school and, in the higher phases, attained at similar levels to non-Emiratis. Their Islamic Education and Arabic attainment was much stronger in the earlier years and similar to that of other students. Emiratis were good citizens of the school. They attended regularly, were punctual to class and related very well to their teachers and their peers. They had a good work ethic. They set themselves learning targets and worked hard to achieve them. They engaged in extra-curricular activities and, at all levels of the school, they held leadership roles including that of Head Boy of the school.

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

Almost all students' behaviour was outstanding throughout the school day. Students were very motivated to learn and demonstrated high levels of interest and concentration. Students were responsible, courteous and respectful to peers and adults. They enjoyed school and felt safe, valued and supported. They showed genuine concern and tolerance of others especially those with special educational needs. Students were self-reliant and collaborated very effectively to resolve issues with a mature approach. They understood how to make quality choices to promote healthy living and fitness. Attendance was good and students were punctual to school and to lessons. Almost all students demonstrated a clear understanding of Islamic values and their impact on contemporary society in Dubai and the wider world. They could identify links between Islam and many of the local traditions. Most students understood the importance of respecting other cultures and religions, and they appreciated the multi-cultural context of Dubai. Students showed respect and understanding of the traditions and heritage of Dubai. Students across the school had a good understanding of community and environmental issues. Younger students, particularly in primary were active classroom monitors, leaders of houses and members of the newly formed junior student council. Senior students accepted and undertook various roles and responsibilities including prefects, house leaders and school council members. Foundation Stage children were actively involved in recycling and others were aware of the importance of the environment, conservation and charity. In particular environmental understanding was a developing feature of the school.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was good across the school especially in the upper stages where teachers' subject knowledge and awareness of examination requirements was a particular strength. The best teaching was seen in Islamic Education, Arabic as an additional language and English, where teachers demonstrated high expectations and actively encouraged critical thinking and independent learning. Teachers enjoyed positive, productive and supportive relationships which ensured a positive learning environment in most classrooms. In the best lessons, teaching engaged and motivated students using well-chosen resources and linking work to real life. Teaching assistants were usually deployed to very good effect in supporting learning, especially for students identified with special educational needs. Teachers frequently used technology to support learning. However, in the less successful lessons, teachers did not cater for the spread of ability and teaching lacked challenge. Teaching seen in other subjects, including accountancy, history, geography and French, was good.

Learning was good in all phases. Students had enthusiastic attitudes to their learning and worked cooperatively with one another. Students enjoyed learning and were keen to take responsibility for their own learning although opportunities for reflection and self-review were missed when teachers talked too much. The best lessons were when teachers involved students in learning and encouraged their independent and critical thinking skills. Students collaborated confidently, for example in English and geography where group work and presentations allowed them to develop their speaking and listening skills. In lessons, they asked thoughtful questions of their teachers to consolidate their understanding.

Assessment was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and primary phase, and good in the secondary and post-16 phases. The school had made a great effort to improve assessment systems and processes with the introduction of nominal levels of attainment which were used throughout the school. Regular student self-evaluation was a strength in the majority of subjects, particularly with older students. Assessment information was accurate, detailed and analysed well but in the Foundation Stage and primary phase it was not benchmarked effectively against external standards. Assessment rubrics were not fully robust and there was no system for ensuring consistency or continuity over time. There was a much more reliable and valid base for assessment of student progress when IGCSE grade levels were used. Students' work was mostly marked regularly but the focus was on accuracy rather than guidance on how to improve.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good across all phases of the school. It was broad and balanced with the exception of Arabic which was not compliant with teaching time regulations. The curriculum was reviewed annually and led to improvements such as refinements in phonics teaching in Foundation Stage and the introduction of new reading books with challenging vocabulary for primary students. Cross-curricular links were being developed, particularly with a thematic approach in Foundation Stage. The timings of the school day had been changed in the foundation stage to create extra time for reading English books every day. Over 500 students attended after-school activities and clubs each week at the time of the inspection. There was an excellent audit of the curriculum to ensure that key topics were covered appropriately. Teachers in the foundation stage and Year 1 met regularly to ensure continuity and progression. Checks on the challenge provided for more able students had been introduced but had yet to significantly impact on the practice of teachers in the classroom.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

The health and safety aspects of the school were outstanding. Relationships between staff and students were excellent and all staff demonstrated high levels of care and concern. The clinic was well staffed and all medications were securely stored. Medical staff provided an extremely successful programme to help students lose weight. The canteen served only healthy food. Bus travel arrangements were very well organised. Bus escorts and drivers were trained in basic first aid and accompanied the students safely to and from school. Regular fire drills, supported by the Department of Civil Defence, had resulted in speedy and safe evacuation. The well maintained buildings were kept immaculately clean due to regular checks by staff. Policies for behaviour management, bullying, complaints and child protection were clearly stated and shared with all staff. Student attendance was carefully monitored and issues of punctuality were responded to promptly.

The school provided a high quality of personal support and guidance for students. Teachers knew their students very well and were fully aware of their individual intellectual, emotional, physical, social and spiritual needs. Relationships were mutually respectful and further characterised by confidence, respect and high levels of support. Behaviour management policies were rarely required but firm and proportionate action was taken when necessary. All students were well known and had ready access to trusted members of staff who provided well-informed advice and guidance about a range of important matters, including future career paths. Teachers were trained annually on child protection issues.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school had effective systems for identifying students with special educational needs. Students were supported through individual learning plans, including classroom modifications and individual support where necessary. Teachers were aware of which students had specific learning needs but did not always plan lessons to fully accommodate those needs. Specialist teachers communicated with other teachers to support students' welfare and well-being. Staff had received training on autism and in-house training on disability. Parents agreed that the school welcomed students with special educational needs. All parents were informed regularly about their child's progress and felt involved in planning the support for their child. Students with special educational needs were additionally supported through a range of extra-curricular activities.

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership of the school was outstanding. The Principal was uncompromising in her support of students' intellectual, emotional, physical, social and spiritual needs. Her vision, drive and clear sense of purpose was shared by teachers who confirmed that the school was well led and took considerable pride in their association with the school. Leaders were very focused on improving teaching and learning whilst maintaining the school's strengths in terms of care and support. This was commended and appreciated by parents and students. Middle managers had an increasingly clear sense of direction and a commitment to the values and vision of the school through professional development and in school training.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The Principal and senior managers had an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school's self-evaluation was detailed and accurate although more descriptive than evaluative. Action planning made use of the views of all stakeholders to identify improvements. However, the school improvement plan did not sufficiently identify priorities for development. The school had started to address the recommendations from the previous inspection report including additional time for literacy, a greater focus on experimental and investigative work, improvements in assessment procedures and the greater use of technology.

Parents were very supportive of the schools' leadership team. School staff communicated frequently with parents and reported on progress and next steps. The school informed parents regularly on matters relating to their children and provided consistent reminders for students to attend school regularly. Teachers' reports gave parents an accurate picture of student's achievement and provided parents with helpful information on strengths and areas for improvement. Productive links existed with the local community and other similar schools who shared good practice and provided useful opportunities for teachers to meet.

The governance of the school was good. The board of governors included representation from a wide range of business and community representatives as well as parents of students in the school. They had a secure knowledge and a positive influence on the school. The board of governors enabled the school leadership to plan and implement effective programmes. However, a minority of parents and students did not feel that the school listened to their opinions or involved them sufficiently in decision-making.

The management of daily routines was good. Accessible notice boards kept all well informed. Teachers had suitable qualifications from their country of origin and could access additional in-service training. Staff turnover was low. The majority of classes were well supported by trained teaching assistants. The

classrooms were supplemented with a good range of specialist facilities including computers, white boards and audio equipment. Dedicated rooms for art, music, drama, science, computers and physical education supported the curriculum well. The library was well stocked for primary students but books for the secondary age group needed updating.

[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 | 102 | 15%        |
|                          | Last year | 225 | 22%        |
| Teachers                 | 51        |     | 54%        |
| Students                 | 60        |     | 70%        |

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

A few parents responded to the survey; fewer than last year. Almost all parents were satisfied with the quality of education available at the school. They agreed that their child was making good progress in the key subjects especially Islamic Education and English, but less so in Arabic. Almost all parents reported that their children enjoyed school and felt safe. Most parents said that their child felt safe on the buses. They agreed that students behaved well and were respected and valued by the school. Almost all parents found the parent-teacher meetings helpful and agreed that the school was well led. Many comments remarked on the leadership of the Headmistress and her positive impact on the school. Fifty-one teachers responded to the survey. They confirmed that that students behaved well and agreed that students enjoyed school and felt safe. Almost all teachers said that the school was well led and that school leaders listened to their opinions about the school.

Most students agreed that they were making good progress in the key subjects especially Islamic Education and English. They were concerned about their progress in Arabic, their involvement in decision making and the extent of extra-curricular activities.



## 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](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

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