

INSPECTION REPORT

Russian International School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Russian International School

Location	Al Muhaisnah
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dubairuschool.com
Telephone	04-2641515
Address	Al Muhaisnah 4, Dubai, UAE
Principal	Liudmila Kashurnikova
Curriculum	Russian
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	4-17 / Kindergarten to Grade 11
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	452
Number of Emirati students	0 (0%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 19th to Wednesday 21 March 2012

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The context of the school

Located in Al Muhaisnah, the Russian International School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Grade 11, aged four to seventeen years. The school opened in September 2011 and aims to provide a Russian curriculum for residents in the UAE. At the time of the inspection, there were 452 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was acceptable. There were no Emirati students in the school. Sixteen different nationalities were represented among the student population.

There were 34 full and part-time teachers, excluding the Principal and the senior leadership team. Most teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The Russian International School provided an acceptable quality of education. It had a few strengths, which included students' attitudes and behaviour and good standards in Russian language and mathematics in all phases. The quality of teaching for effective learning, students' learning and assessment were acceptable in all phases. The curriculum and the quality of support for students were also acceptable at all stages, but there was a lack of support within the curriculum for student's studying Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language and in lessons for students experiencing learning difficulties. Health and safety arrangements were good in all phases. Leadership, self-evaluation and improvement planning, partnerships with parents, governance and management, including staffing, facilities and resources, were all acceptable. Students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language were unsatisfactory. As this was the first inspection for this newly established school, there were no specific recommendations to be undertaken. School leaders displayed a good capacity to improve and were dedicated to the school's ongoing improvement journey.

Key strengths

- Students' attainment and progress in Russian and mathematics;
- Well behaved students and their positive relationships with their teachers;
- Engaged learners who were keen to be fully involved in the life of the school;
- The vision and commitment of the Principal.

Recommendations

- Ensure compliance with Ministry of Education requirements with regard to Islamic Education and Arabic for additional language learners in the school;
- Continue to implement strategies to improve teaching, learning, attainment and progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies;
- Make more effective use of assessment information to plan learning tasks that are appropriately challenging for all ability levels;
- Improve the arrangements for the identification, support and curriculum provision for all students with special educational needs;
- Review aspects of the curriculum to provide more opportunities for students to develop skills which are useful in an international context;
- Work with parents to address the traffic flow of the school buses and parents' cars through the school's parking area to eliminate potential traffic hazards.

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

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Russian				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

In English language and science, students' attainment was acceptable in all phases. In Russian and mathematics, across all phases, attainment was good. In Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language, attainment was unsatisfactory. In Islamic Education, most students could not explain basic Islamic concepts to an age-appropriate level. They could not explain the meaning of the prescribed verses or Hadeeth. In Arabic, as an additional language, the majority of students were able to identify most Arabic language letters. They had clear listening skills but their reading and writing skills were very weak and they lacked confidence when speaking with adults. In English, most students had age-appropriate skills for students with English as an additional language. Lack of extended reading meant that, by the end of Grade 11, a majority of students experienced difficulty analysing texts and using evidence to justify their ideas about a writer's techniques. Writing skills were generally underdeveloped throughout the school. In Russian, almost all students demonstrated excellent verbal command of their language and displayed a rich vocabulary. Their writing skills were less well developed. Attainment in Russian literature was outstanding with students displaying a depth of knowledge and excellent ability to analyse a wide range of classical and modern literature. In mathematics, student's attainment in mental calculations, algebra and geometry exceeded international expectations. However, the students did not study statistics, probability, vectors and other aspects of modern mathematics, and this meant their skills applying mathematics to the real world through problem- solving and modeling were underdeveloped. In science, most Kindergarten and primary students had an appropriate general knowledge of key scientific aspects of the world around them. At middle and secondary stages, this knowledge was expanded to include concepts such as plant growth, electricity, and organic chemistry. Skills in scientific exploration and analysis were less well developed than knowledge.

Progress ranged from unsatisfactory to good across all subjects and stages in the school. Progress was unsatisfactory at all stages in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language. In Russian and mathematics, students made good progress in all aspects of their courses. In English language and science, most students made acceptable progress. Most students were making progress in acquiring scientific knowledge. Progress for students with special educational needs was acceptable throughout the school.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Positive behaviour was evident across the school. Students had good relationships with their peers and respectful relationships with their teachers. They had a sensible and positive attitude towards learning. Senior students had clear responsibilities to ensure the smooth running of the school and maintaining discipline. Students were fully aware of what constituted healthy lifestyles. Attendance was acceptable and students were punctual when arriving in the morning and when moving between classes. Across the school, students had an age-appropriate understanding of Islamic values. They could talk about some of the local traditions and heritages such as the dress-code and the habits. However, few could easily explain Islamic values in detail. Students were able to compare and contrast different cultures. They had a strong sense of their own culture. They could explain the uniqueness of Dubai and talk about its multi-cultural make-up. Students understood their responsibilities in the school well. However, their responsibilities within the school and with the wider community were very limited. Students knew how Dubai had developed and were able to talk about why this had happened in a very short time. Students kept their school very clean and tidy but were not involved in environmental activities. They could talk about conservation well but they couldn't explain how to achieve a sustainable economy or how protecting natural resources affected the environment.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The quality of teaching for effective learning was acceptable in all phases of the school. Most teachers knew their subjects well and were mostly confident in how to teach them. Lessons were usually carefully planned according to the school's generic framework, although expectations in too many lessons were not sufficiently high. Although the majority of teachers provided tasks suited for relevant grade levels, the level of challenge for more able learners and support for slower learners were not consistently appropriate. A few teachers supplemented textbooks with some practical activities and worksheets but too often tasks were not related well to real life contexts.

Learning was acceptable across the school. Students were almost always motivated and enthusiastic although in a majority of classes they were passive in their learning. They were confident in sharing their learning with others but were not given frequent enough opportunities to do so. Students undertook very little independent research or enquiry and had limited access to information and communications technology in lessons. Most lessons, with the exception of Russian literature, did not challenge students to develop their critical and higher order thinking skills. Although teachers often shared the objectives of lessons with students, the rubrics for assessment were not used regularly by teachers to involve students more fully in reviewing their own learning.

The school's assessment of learning was of an acceptable quality. Since inception the school had collated extensive assessment data and developed a tracking system for each student. Assessment information was also not used effectively by all teachers to monitor the progress of students and to identify next steps for learning. Despite targets written in a register and communicated regularly to parents, students were not always clear about their next steps for learning. School leaders now had a better understanding of broad strengths and weaknesses in attainment in the school and able identify trends and strategies for

improvement. In primary, middle and senior school, students regularly completed homework or written work in class, but teachers did not always give feedback to students to inform them about how to improve.

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

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The quality of curriculum was acceptable. It was based on a clear rationale and met the requirement of the National Curriculum of Russia with optional subjects such as art, music and choreography. However, it did not comply with the Ministry of Education requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic. The curriculum was mostly driven by text books with little enhancement or modification. There was progression from year to year within the curriculum for most subjects but the links from primary to middle were not clear enough in Islamic Education and Arabic. Although the curriculum had been reviewed it still did not fully meet the needs of all students. Opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking were inconsistent features of the planned curriculum. However, it offered free remedial lessons to support students who were underperforming in Russian, English, mathematics, and science. The curriculum provided too few opportunities for enrichment, practical work, cross-curricular links and links to real life. With the exception of occasional projects and themed weeks, the extra-curricular activities available were too limited.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The school's arrangements to promote healthy living and ensure that students were safe were good at all stages. Maintenance of the building and grounds, and procedures for security, were implemented well. Buses were in good condition, but arrivals and departures of students were not well organised. Traffic flow of the school buses and parents' cars through the school's parking area and exit caused potential hazards. Emergency evacuation procedures were practised effectively and staff checked fire-fighting equipment appropriately. Physical exercise was a positive feature of the school's provision and healthy living was promoted in a range of ways. The doctor and nurse monitored students' health effectively and administered first aid and appropriate medicines when required. They ensured that students received helpful advice about healthy living and kept staff well informed about relevant health matters related to students. The child protection policy, on which all staff had been briefed, was being updated.

The quality of support for students was acceptable at all phases. All staff were highly committed to ensuring the well-being of students, and had good relationships with them. Staff supported students satisfactorily by giving them advice in twice-monthly guidance sessions and in other ways. Teachers knew the general needs of their students, and when necessary drew up useful profiles to help diagnose the difficulties experienced by students whose attainment was low. Overall, however, special educational needs were not always identified or addressed effectively.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The quality of leadership and management was acceptable overall. The hard-working and committed Principal had set a clear vision for the new school which was to preserve national Russian culture and tradition, develop respect for other cultures and to educate students to achieve high standards. The Principal had identified areas where improvements could be made and had put strategies in place to begin to address these deficiencies. She had taken steps to empower middle leaders to have sufficient authority and autonomy to make the changes needed to move the school forward. However, they have not been wholly successful in this area as some staff did not fully understand how young people learned and what represented good teaching. Her initiatives had resulted in some improvements to teaching and learning but were not consistently implemented or applied by all teachers. The school, under the leadership of the Principal demonstrated a strong capacity to improve.

Procedures for self-evaluation and improvement were acceptable and were at the early stages of development. These were being used to determine which aspects of the schools' work needed to improve. Whilst still in the process of development, these reflective judgements were already becoming increasingly realistic. Performance management procedures were in place to evaluate teaching and learning and were being used to determine the effectiveness of the provision. These were not yet fully effective. The school recognised the need improve the delivery of Islamic Education and Arabic.

Partnership with parents and the community were acceptable. Parents spoke positively about the welcoming nature of the school and the frequent opportunities they had to consult with teachers. The school had effective arrangements for reporting to parents. They were kept informed of their children's progress. Links with the local community required further development.

The quality of governance was acceptable and the school's partnership with the Board of Directors was a supportive one. The Board was heavily committed to preserving national Russian culture and traditions. The Board contributed positively to the development of the school and held it to account for standards.

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. There were sufficient teachers, suitably qualified to cover most subjects and sections. The facilities were generally well maintained and clean. Access into and within the school premises was appropriate for all students. Kindergarten rooms were bright and stimulating. Sports facilities included a swimming pool. There was a small gym which was well-utilised. There were insufficient information and communications technology facilities within classrooms to enable students to use the technology as an integral part of the learning process and existing resources were too limited to effectively promote independent learning.

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	45	13%
	Last year	0	0
Teachers	13		38%
Students	12		19%

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

Minorities of parents, students and teachers responded to their surveys. Most parents who responded were very happy with the quality of education their children were receiving. They felt the school kept their children safe and most felt their children were happy in their learning and were making good progress in most subjects. A significant number felt that their children were not making good progress in Arabic and Islamic Education. A third of teachers responded to their questionnaire and felt that they were providing a good education for the students with good support. Students who responded felt strongly that the quality of food provided in the school needed to be improved. Most wanted the school to arrange more outings and to introduce after-school 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

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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