

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Salam Private School

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Salam Private School

Location	Al Nahda
Type of school	Private
Website	www.alsalamschool.sch.ae
Telephone	04 2679594
Address	P O Box 5251
Principal	Susan Patricia Johnston
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	3-18 years / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1,056
Number of Emirati students	263 (25%)
Date of the inspection	Sunday 27th to Wednesday 30th November 2011

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The context of the school

Located in Al Nahda, Al Salam Private School opened in September 1988. The current enrolment is 1,056 students, aged three to 18 years. The school followed the English National 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.

There were 102 full-time teachers, including the Principal and a senior leadership team. All teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. They were supported by 13 teaching assistants. Approximately 25 per cent of students were Emirati. Forty-three different nationalities were represented among the student population.

At the time of the inspection, the Principal was in her 23rd year at the school.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Al Salam Private School provided a good quality of education. It had a number of important strengths, which included good attainment and progress in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language, and Arabic as an additional language and English in all phases. Children entering the Foundation Stage from the on-site nursery benefited from a high level of English. Attainment and progress were good in mathematics in the secondary and post-16 phases and were good in science in elementary, secondary and post-16. Students' attitudes, behaviour and Islamic understanding were outstanding across all phases of the school. The quality of teaching and learning was good across the school. Teachers demonstrated a good understanding of the needs of all of the students.

Significant progress had been achieved in addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection, especially in attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language. Additionally, improved teaching and learning was a school-wide focus which had resulted in significant improvement in the Foundation Stage and in primary. The quality of care and support for students at all phases was outstanding, along with the health and safety features of the school. Students with special educational needs were identified and well supported by specialists and teaching assistants.

Key strengths

- The improvements in attainment and progress in Arabic and English
- Students' outstanding behaviour and dedication to their learning
- Good reading and writing skills of primary students
- Visionary leadership of the head of school and a committed teaching team.

Recommendations

- Use existing practical learning opportunities more effectively and review the curriculum to ensure greater challenge for higher achieving students;
- Continue to develop ongoing, in-class assessment procedures across all subject areas to improve students' progress;
- Develop the use of information and communication technology (ICT) by teachers and students to support learning.

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

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

Attainment in Islamic Education was good in all phases. Most students in higher grades were able to link their knowledge of Islam to their life. In secondary, they were able to explain the Qur'anic verses but not in depth. Good attainment in Arabic as a first language was evident as most students were able to understand a range of familiar expressions, comprehend instructions and follow them correctly. Attainment in Arabic as an additional language was good because students could speak very well in class

presentations and informally. Attainment in English was good across the school. At the end of Foundation Stage, children had good listening and speaking skills and were confident in basic reading and writing; in the other phases, almost all could read and write well with expression, using appropriate grammar. Attainment in mathematics was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and primary, and good in secondary and post-16. Students developed their understanding of number as they moved up through the primary school and could calculate accurately using a range of mental and written methods. Through the secondary phase, students developed a sound understanding of advanced mathematics. Science was acceptable in Foundation Stage and good across the rest of the school. In primary, students gained a deeper understanding of scientific processes and were comfortable using keys to classify different living things. Students in secondary increasingly worked in small groups or pairs to undertake experimentation and were able to explain their findings to the rest of the class.

Students made good progress in Islamic Education. They systematically acquired a good understanding of morals and values in Islam. However, their awareness of Islamic resources was underdeveloped. Progress was good in all phases in both Arabic as a first language and as an additional language. Almost all students in primary learned how to take part effectively in conversations and to seek and convey information. They built very well on their basic writing and reading and speaking skills. Progress in English was good across the school. Almost all students at the Foundation Stage gained a good range of vocabulary and could express themselves effectively. Progress in mathematics was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and in primary years, and good in secondary years and Post-16. Progress was slowed on occasions by lack of challenge in tasks set, especially for the most able students. Progress in science was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and good in the other phases. Students' learning was boosted by practical activities and class visits. Students developed strong academic knowledge in the higher grades but it was not matched by development of practical skills or discovery learning.

The attainment and progress of Emirati students were in line with other students. However, in some end of year assessments, they outperformed the rest of the year group, especially in Grades 8 to 10. In the other grades, their end-of-year assessments demonstrated that most of their scores were broadly similar to those of their counterparts.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

Almost all behaviour in lessons was outstanding. Students were self-disciplined, very respectful to each other and their teachers, and they talked positively about their school. They were motivated and responsible about their work, and collaborated very effectively with adults and one another. Students had extremely positive attitudes toward healthy living and fitness. The school's records indicated that the students' attendance was acceptable. Across the school, students' Islamic and cultural understanding was outstanding. Students organised charitable and service activities as a part of the school's vision of making Islamic values an intrinsic part of students' lives. Students fully appreciated the local culture and the multi-cultural nature of Dubai society; they were well aware of how the opportunity to live in Dubai enhanced their lives. Students were proud of their roles and responsibilities within the school and local community. They valued being involved in the school's decision-making. Students were very knowledgeable about Dubai's development and economic changes. Older students were very aware of the economic issues globally and locally, and participated in school's activities that protect and preserve the environment.

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

Teaching for effective learning was good across the school. Most teachers had good subject knowledge; they promoted learning that engaged and motivated students, often incorporating real-life contexts. Well-trained teaching assistants provided good support for learning. Students successfully worked collaboratively and shared their personal viewpoints. Most lesson planning was thorough and took into account the learning needs of higher and lower attaining groups of students. Students with special educational needs were well supported in mainstream and in withdrawal groups. Lower primary students received individual teaching in reading which promoted good progress. Most teachers used discussion and questioning well to develop language acquisition and deepen understanding across the key subjects. However, the pace of a few lessons did not allow sufficient time for consolidation of learning through evaluation of the learning activities. Secondary and post-16 teaching, particularly in mathematics and science, did not challenge students sufficiently by extending their ability to undertake independent investigations. Although most resources were used effectively, ICT was rarely used across the school to promote learning. Teaching seen in other subjects including art, physical education, history, geography and music was good. Teachers promoted interactive learning which developed subject specific skills.

Learning was good in all phases. Students valued the opportunity to learn and took responsibility for their own progress. Students helped each other and worked co-operatively with their teachers. When given the opportunity, students' questioning and participation in discussion developed deeper understanding. The proficient reading and writing skills developed in the primary classes enabled students to learn independently, conduct investigations and projects, and to produce extended pieces of creative writing. Students were confident communicators with good presentation skills. In secondary and post-16 classes, students' suggestions and comments often extended learning beyond the teachers' planned lessons.

Assessment was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and primary, and good in secondary and post-16. Across the school progress had been made in gathering data on students' progress, but the analysis of the data was not detailed enough. Teachers in each grade and subject knew the attainment and progress of their students well. Foundation Stage and primary teachers tracked students' progress in building skills and knowledge against the assessment criteria of the Cambridge curriculum and a standardised reading test. Although much information was gathered, teachers did not use it on an ongoing basis to identify appropriate learning objectives for individual students and incorporate these into their daily planning. In secondary and post-16 phases, teachers used a good range of assessments guided by the criteria of the IGCSE and A-level courses. Although feedback to students was mostly oral, it helped them to be clear about 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 good across all phases in the school. It was broad and balanced, and provided students with an appropriate blend of academic, practical, aesthetic and physical experiences. The curriculum was well planned and regularly reviewed. The subject options programme at secondary level was expanded to include two additional subject choices. The needs of all students were taken into account and provision made for less able students by a specialist team of support staff. However, most able students were not always provided with sufficient challenge in lessons. Transition from one phase to the next was carefully planned and both students and their parents were involved in various 'orientation days'. A useful careers advice programme was provided for students. A wide-ranging curriculum enrichment programme was organised and built into the school day to ensure maximum student participation. A number of educational and recreational visits were organised by the school to places of interest.

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

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were outstanding. There were detailed policies and procedures, and all staff had very strong, caring attitudes towards students. There were extremely well-established safe routines, especially for students using school transport and the security of the site. Students were carefully supervised as they moved around the school and during break-times. Health and hygiene were given a strong priority, and buildings and equipment were maintained in a good condition. Chemicals were securely stored in the science laboratory and safety equipment was available for students to wear. Fire drills were carried out regularly, and evacuation times and staff comments recorded efficiently. Medicines and students' personal records were kept securely by the school nurse in a well organised clinic where she was supported by a visiting doctor. A healthy living programme was delivered throughout the school and individual students were supported to achieve more healthy lifestyles. Child protection was recently reviewed and was regarded as a high priority by the school.

The quality of support for students was outstanding. Staff had very good relationships with students and were very aware of their social, physical and emotional needs. Staff gave freely of their time even during breaks and after school to support students. This caring approach engendered mutual respect and trust. The school had effective systems for managing behaviour which were well understood by all teachers and fully endorsed by the leadership team. Parents were well informed about the school's expectations of standards of behaviour. Students received good advice and guidance from staff on academic and personal progress, health and future careers. This advice frequently led to improvements in students' attainment or progress such as the excellent progress of early readers through one-to-one adult support. Rigorous monitoring of and provision for students with special educational needs enabled them to make good progress. Parents of these students and appropriate external agencies were fully involved in decision-making about their learning. The school kept accurate records of attendance and punctuality, and strove to ensure high levels in this area.

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

The leadership of the school was outstanding. The Headmistress led the school in an unassuming but very efficient manner which set the tone for the entire building. The Head of School and the senior leaders were highly focused on improving of all aspects of the school which had resulted in improvements in almost all key subject areas. The caring and secure climate that permeated the school, spearheaded by with the leadership team, was clearly viewed as a positive attribute of the school by students and parents. The senior leaders led the curriculum study and revision process, and were successful because of a very effective distributive leadership model.

Good systematic improvement planning addressed all recommendations from the previous report. Strategies for improvement were devised after a thorough assessment of data available and then shared effectively with all members of the school staff. The action plan and relevant strategies were shared with all staff, and enabled teachers to make effective use of data to focus and improve students' learning. Self-evaluation had resulted in improvement of the curriculum and laid the framework for continued curriculum and instructional improvement.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the teaching of English and the overall teaching staff. Productive links existed between the school and parents. However, additional links to the greater community were not developed enough. The school communicated well with the parents through newsletters, its website, telephone calls, e-mails, face-to-face meetings and coffee mornings. Parents were very pleased with such highly effective communication opportunities with the school.

The governance of the school was good. The board of governors had a positive influence on the school. Regular meetings with senior leadership were held to review action plans and areas of mutual concern. The board of governors had appointed a parent member. The board of governors enabled the school

leadership to plan and implement effective programmes and processes, and hold them accountable for the outcomes.

The management, staffing and facilities of the school were good. Highly effective procedures and routines supported the total management of the school. All staff were appropriately certified and supported by an effective professional development programme. Teachers reported a positive, professional learning environment. Teachers were highly valued and supported in their development and given autonomy to direct their own professional growth. Additions to the staff since the last inspection effectively complemented the instructional and managerial aspects of the school. The school facility was safe, clean, and well maintained. Computer laboratories were well equipped, although teachers did not make enough use of ICT to enhance their teaching and to strengthen students' research and analysis skills.

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	217	28%
	Last year	242	32%
Teachers	36		43%
Students	54		99%

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

A minority of parents responded to the survey, a few less than last year. A minority of teachers but almost all senior students responded to the survey. Most parents were satisfied with the overall quality of education available at the school, a view shared by most students. Most parents believed that their children were making good progress in the key subjects, with the exception of Arabic. In Arabic as a first or additional language, a few parents indicated that progress was not good. A majority of parents indicated that they were involved in the life of the school, but a few disagreed. Majorities of parents and teachers believed that inspection had led to improvements at the school, and most teachers thought that inspection had helped them improve professionally. Teachers' other views of the school were positive on all aspects

of provision. Senior students also held positive views about the school, but about a third indicated dissatisfaction with the range of subjects available for them to study.

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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