

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Al Diyafah High School

Report published in April 2013

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Diyafah High School

Location	Al Qusais
Type of school	Private
Website	www.diyafah.com
Telephone	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	1,474
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	6 (less than 1%)
Date of the inspection	7th to 10th January 2013

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## The context of the school

Located in Al Qusais, Al Diyafah High School was in its 31st year of operation at the time of inspection. Most of the students were Indian nationals and about a tenth were Pakistanis. There were over 25 other nations represented in the student body. Most students spoke English as an additional language and almost all learned Arabic as a third or fourth language.

The school offered a modified curriculum based on the National Curriculum for England that included five languages. About 28 per cent of the students studied Islamic Education. Kindergarten (Foundation Stage) comprised about ten per cent of the school's population and the post-16 phase about four per cent. Older students wrote examinations for the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) after Year 11, as well as Advanced/Subsidiary Level examinations in the post-16 phase.

The school had identified 17 students as having some type of special educational need, but provided specialised support to an additional 30 students. There were 122 teachers on staff, almost all of whom had a recognised teaching qualification. Teachers of the younger students were supported by 14 assistants, an increase since the previous inspection. Only a minority of Kindergarten teachers had specialist qualifications for early childhood education. The Principal was in her fourth year as leader of the school. She was supported by a Vice-Principal, three Heads of Departments, Assistant Heads and co-ordinators. At the time of inspection students in the post-16 phase were writing external examinations for Advanced and Advanced Subsidiary level.

## Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

### Key strengths

- The students' good progress in most key subjects;
- Students' good and outstanding personal and social development;
- The outstanding curriculum and support for students in post-16;
- The outstanding provision for health and safety across the school;
- The good overall leadership and management of the school.

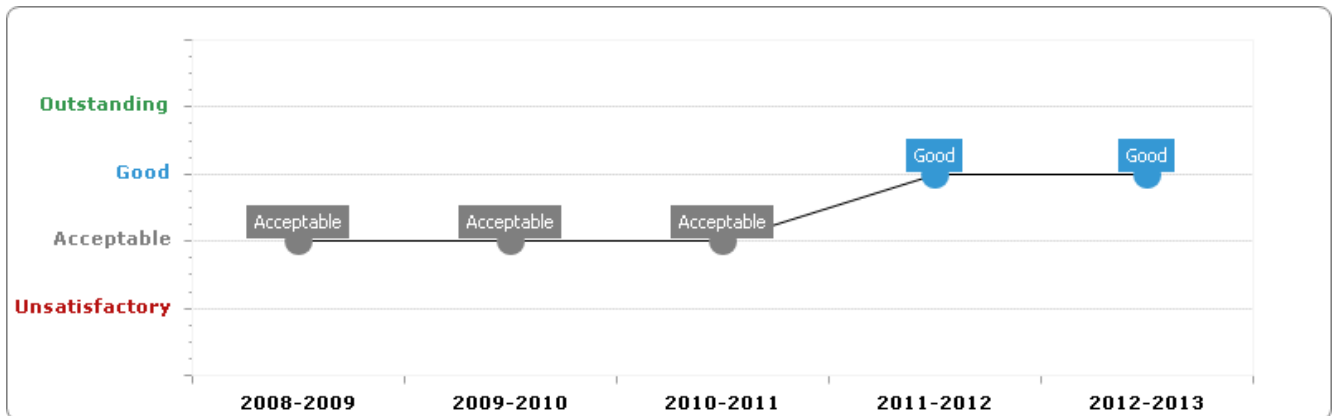
### Recommendations

- Continue to raise students' attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good, especially in Arabic and the Foundation Stage;
- Improve the use of assessment information to plan the curriculum and inform teaching;
- Broaden the Foundation Stage curriculum to include all strands of development;
- Ensure that the Arabic curriculum includes all aspects of language development.

## Progress since the last inspection

- Progress on raising attainment of older students in Islamic Education and Arabic was limited;
- Teachers had improved their use of questions to promote students' thinking skills;
- Assessment information was used more effectively to support students with special educational needs, but was not used to adjust teaching for the high attaining students;
- The school had improved the sharing of information with students and their parents;
- New leaders had been appointed in secondary school pastoral roles.

## 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	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>English</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Acceptable	Good	Good	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Mathematics</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Science</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[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	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment was acceptable in Foundation Stage and in a majority of the key subjects across the other phases of the school. In Islamic Education, most students had adequate knowledge and understanding of Islam's rituals; older students understood the difference between Zakat and Sadaqa. However, students were not always able to use verses from The Holy Qur'an as a reference to support points of view. In Arabic as a first language, the majority of students could communicate clearly using colloquial Arabic. A significant minority of students, particularly in Years 7 to 11, lacked good speaking skills and their vocabularies were weak. In English, the majority of students in the secondary and post-16 phases displayed comprehensive understanding and use of vocabulary. The writing outcomes across all phases were sometimes inaccurate in grammar and expressive content. In mathematics, the majority of children in Foundation Stage could recognise, write and count numbers reliably up to 10. Students in the other phases had good written computational skills, but their abilities to calculate mentally were less developed. Attainment in science was good in the primary, secondary and post-16 classes, reflecting the standards reached in external examinations. Students had good recall of previous work, a good grasp of scientific terms and good practical skills. They answered questions well but did not ask many searching questions about the topics being discussed. Attainment in the Foundation Stage was acceptable in all subjects. Children developed age-appropriate letter, phonics and number recognition, but they had limited opportunities to develop a broad range of language and mathematical skills.

Progress was good in most key subjects but acceptable in Foundation Stage. In Islamic Education most students were appropriately developing their understanding of concepts such as Halal and Haram. In Arabic as a first language, students made just acceptable progress in developing language skills due to limited opportunities to converse. Progress in speaking and writing skills had improved when students were expressing their feelings and thoughts. However, there were not enough opportunities for all students to read. In English, a consistent pattern of progress in examination results was evident in the secondary and post-16 phases. Confidence and fluency in speaking English as an additional language was noted among a majority of students in those phases. In mathematics, progress was good, but limited by too few opportunities to apply mathematics to solve everyday problems. Progress in science was good in most classes, with students developing increasing knowledge and experimental expertise as they progressed through the school. They made progress developing higher-order thinking skills when they were given enough time to discuss their work. This did not occur if the pace of questioning was too rapid. Progress in Foundation Stage was generally acceptable but inhibited by too many teacher-centred lessons and few opportunities to develop the full range of concepts and skills in key subjects.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good in Kindergarten and primary. In secondary and post-16, attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. Almost all students showed a strong sense of responsibility were sensitive to each other's needs. Students of all ages had very positive attitudes towards learning and were keen to gain knowledge. They were self-disciplined, friendly and respectful towards everyone in the school community. They understood the principles of a healthy life, particularly the value of exercise and sport. Attendance had improved since the previous inspection to a good level.

Students' understanding of Islamic values and their cultural awareness were good in most phases and outstanding in the post-16 phase. Most had good knowledge of their own cultures; they also reflected well on the similarities and differences between India and Dubai with respect to the diversity of cultures. Most had good appreciation for Dubai and the reasons for its rapid development. Students' understanding of Islam's influence on our local society was adequate. Students understood the relevance and influence of Islam on the local society.

Most students were aware of and carried out their responsibilities as members of local and global communities. Post-16 students demonstrated an excellent work ethic and were active in helping each other, particularly those with special educational needs. Most demonstrated respect for the environment; they stressed the importance of recycling. Most students participated in energy conservation initiatives. Outside school, many students were actively helping less fortunate people in other countries.

[View judgements](#)

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

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable in Foundation Stage and good in the rest of the school. Teachers' subject knowledge was strong in the majority of subjects, especially in the higher primary years and the secondary and post-16 phases. Teaching in Foundation Stage and the lower primary years was less well matched to the needs of young students, with insufficient opportunities for child-led activities. Lesson planning was consistent across the school and provided a good framework for learning. Teachers used an appropriate range of resources, although teachers of Arabic and Islamic Education were overly-dependent upon textbooks. In a significant number of lessons, the students did not have sufficiently active roles, limiting their progress. This was especially true of Islamic Education and Arabic lessons and in Foundation Stage. Generally, teachers planned activities for different ability groups, but the tasks were applied to all

students rather than matched to what they already knew. The opportunities for developing critical thinking skills were present in the majority of subjects. Generally, teachers did not use questions to promote thinking. Teaching in the non-key subjects and activities was generally of good quality.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable in Foundation Stage and good in the primary, secondary and post-16 phases. Almost all students were enthusiastic about learning. They were able to take responsibility, even at young ages, and to work well, independently and collaboratively. Most students were confident enough to share their understanding with classmates and adults; peer teaching was very effective when it took place. Students were helped to make connections with previous learning, other areas of the curriculum and real life. Some excellent enquiry-based learning was seen in English, mathematics and science lessons. Good use of information and communication technology was made through the personal enrichment programme, in the computer laboratories for research and for mathematics homework. In Foundation Stage, there were too few opportunities for children to make choices and decisions. Activities that allowed rich language development were infrequent.

The assessment of learning was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and primary phase but good in secondary and post-16. There were effective systems for monitoring students' progress and setting targets for improvement in most subjects, especially for students with special educational needs. Teachers generally had accurate information on their students' attainment and used it well to set targets for improvement and to track their progress over time. Students' knowledge of how they could improve their work was inconsistent but was stronger in the older classes. Teachers made some use of assessment data to identify low and high achieving students and provide support. However, the use of assessment data was not fully exploited to support individual students in lessons. Assessment systems in Islamic Education, Arabic and in Foundation Stage had not improved significantly since the last inspection.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good in the primary and secondary phases and outstanding in the post-16 phase. In Foundation Stage, the curriculum remained acceptable, as a new plan had been only partially implemented. The school had reviewed the curriculum and made some important changes. For example, the community outreach programme provided a very wide range of opportunities, including international links, to enrich post-16 students' experiences. The inclusion of a values education course further enriched the curriculum for Years 10 to 12. New subjects provided additional choices for post-16 students. In addition, the school had excellent systems for ensuring smooth transition from one stage of education to the next, including transition into employment or higher education. These changes all contributed to the

outstanding curriculum for the oldest students. A wider range of activities had also been provided by the personal enrichment programme offered to primary and secondary students. This provided interesting and relevant opportunities for students' learning and development. Planning and review of the curriculum for Islamic Education and Arabic were still not rigorous enough to ensure sufficient breadth and depth. As a result, the curriculum remained acceptable for these two subjects.

[View judgements](#)

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

Procedures for ensuring students' health and safety were outstanding. The school's transport provision fulfilled all legal requirements. Fire safety procedures were prioritised by school personnel, including participation by the student council. The premises were maintained to an excellent standard and provided an inclusive learning environment. The health and welfare team had embraced best practices in terms of policies and record keeping. Medicines were securely stored and registered. The medical staff had put an effective programme for students' health, diet and fitness in place. Arrangements for child protection were outstanding, as evidenced in school policy documents and in the deployment of four staff members with specific roles as child protection officers.

The quality of support for students was good across the school. Teachers knew their students very well and relationships were strong, as was the management of students' behaviour and the support for their overall well-being. Effective programmes ensured that students were well informed about issues such as bullying and substance abuse. Parents received comprehensive, ongoing information about the school's expectations and about the behaviour and progress of their children. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality was effective and had resulted in improved attendance. Aptitude testing and comprehensive guidance on future education and career options was provided.

[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 and maintained links with a number of external agencies, which provided diagnoses and therapies. The specialist staff had the necessary expertise to design effective programmes for individual students, monitor their progress closely and modify the curriculum and assessments. There was collaboration with teachers so that most students made good progress, but accommodations were not consistently implemented across all phases

and subjects. Elective subjects supported students' progress, both academically and socially. A parent support group assisted parents to work closely with the school to advance their children's progress. The identification of gifted and talented students was at an early stage; the most able students did not have sufficient opportunities to extend their understanding and apply their skills.

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

Leadership at the school was good, overall. The Principal and senior leaders were highly committed to the school and almost all were competent in leading the staff to further improvements. The school achieved its stated mission well. There was a shared direction for the school which was enabled by productive relations and regular communication. Teams worked together effectively to lead teachers and students toward high achievements. Capacity to improve further was evident.

The school's self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. There was a realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and measures had been taken to address them. There had been significant progress on almost all recommendations from the previous inspection report. Performance evaluation was regularly carried out by leaders at different levels, fostering improved teaching and learning. The school had surveyed the student and parent communities to identify areas for improvement and had made an action plan based upon the results. The short and long-range plans were realistic but ambitious and were aimed at improving provision across several key areas of the curriculum.

The school's links with parents and the community were outstanding. Parents were involved in both the education of their own children and those of others. Volunteering by parents was a strength, as was the presence of parents in classrooms. Parents helped forge links outside the school that broadened the experiences of students and helped the less fortunate. For example, they organised a large amount of aid to a hospital in Sri Lanka, using funds raised by their children. Community links in Dubai gave students opportunities to learn and serve others, especially the less fortunate.

Governance of the school was good. The owners had established strong accountability structures that ensured good performance by leaders. Statutory requirements were met. There was considerable re-investment in the school's resources, including both teacher development and physical improvements to the building. Governance included consultation with parents and the student council.

The management of the school was good, exemplified by efficient timetabling. The movement of staff and students during the school day was punctual and orderly. Information was provided to the school

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community electronically and by newsletters. Almost all teachers were qualified and experienced. A number of other professionals offered specialist support and had positive effects upon the daily lives of the students. The very well-maintained premises and facilities provided a stimulating and inclusive learning environment. The teaching areas were mostly of an acceptable size. Learning resources had improved, especially in the provision of information and communications technology, but were still insufficient in some key subjects and in Foundation Stage.

[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	366	36%
	Last year	616	64%
Teachers	104		85%
Students	137		89%

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

Just over a third of parents responded to the survey this year, a drop from the previous year's response rate. The survey was conducted over the semester break when school was not in session. Almost all parents were satisfied with the overall quality of education provided and believed that their children were safe at school. Parents thought that their children were making good progress in the key subjects, but were less positive regarding progress in Arabic. On other aspects of provision, parents expressed satisfaction. Most teachers responded to their survey and were positive in their views about the school's provision in all aspects. Most senior students responded also holding slightly less positive views than their parents. About a third of those students thought that school leaders did not listen to their opinions about the school. Students were very positive in their opinions of the quality of teaching provided to them.



## 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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