

INSPECTION REPORT

Star International School - Mirdif

Report published in April 2013

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Star International School - Mirdif

Location	Mirdif
Type of school	Private
Website	www.starschoolmirdif.com
Telephone	04-2884644
Address	PO Box 51008, Dubai
Principal	Debbie Trivett
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-11 / Foundation Stage to Year 6
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	275
Largest nationality group of Students	British
Number of Emirati students	27 (10%)
Date of the inspection	21st January to 23rd January 2013

Contents

The context of the school	3
Overall school performance 2012-2013	4
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
Progress since the last inspection	5
Trend of overall performance.....	5
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	6
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	8
How well does the school protect and support students?	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
How well does the school provide for Emirati students?.....	9
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	12
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	13
What happens next?	15
How to contact us	15

The context of the school

The Star International Private School is located in Mirdif and provides education for girls and boys, ages three to 11 years. The school followed the National Curriculum of England and Wales, in addition to Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language and Arabic as an additional language, as prescribed by the Ministry of Education.

At the time of the inspection there were 275 students enrolled, representing 49 nationalities. Twenty-seven Emirati students were on the roll. Sixteen students with special educational needs were identified across both phases of the school. Students were grouped into 16 classes with the biggest population in the Foundation Stage and early primary years.

The school had 27 full-time teaching staff, most of whom held appropriate qualifications. Seven nationalities were represented, most of them being British. Of the 17 teaching assistants, two were identified as learning support aides. The Acting Principal was newly-appointed to the school.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Good attainment and progress in all subjects in the Foundation Stage;
- Good student behaviour and positive attitudes to learning;
- Good quality curriculum , especially in the Foundation Stage;
- Good arrangements for health and safety at all stages of the school;
- Positive relationships between school and parents which effectively supported students' learning.

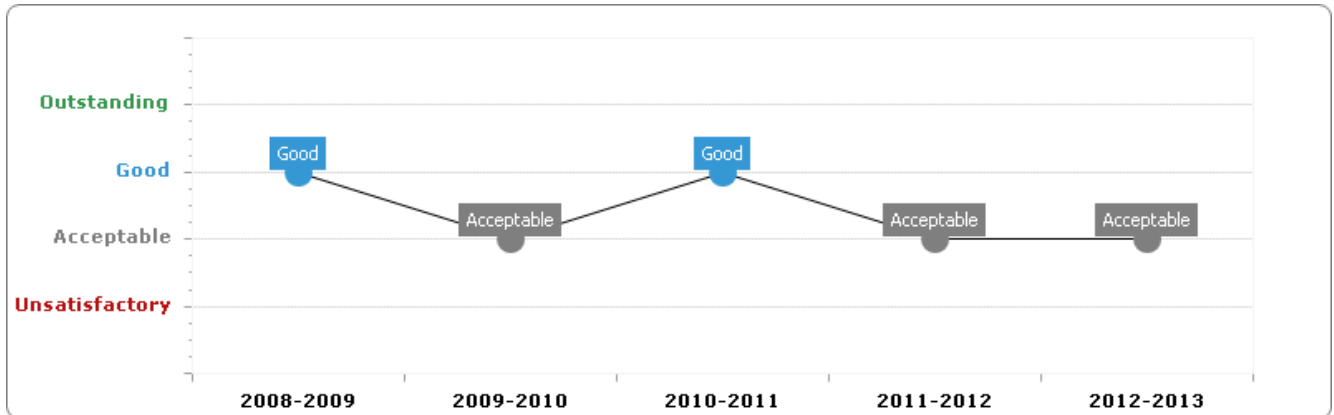
Recommendations

- Improve students' progress in all key subjects in primary and attainment in Arabic as an additional language;
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the primary years;
- Introduce a comprehensive screening process to help identify and support students with special educational needs;
- Devise effective strategies to stabilise staffing and leadership throughout the school.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school has addressed, with varying degrees of success, five of the six recommendations from the previous report;
- The school is compliant with all Ministry of Education requirements;
- The school is currently led by a new, acting Principal, the third individual since the previous inspection and has successfully addressed many of the concerns expressed by parents and staff.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Acceptable	Good	Not Applicable
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Quality of students' learning	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable

[Read paragraph](#)

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	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Most students demonstrated acceptable attainment and were able to recite a range of Holy Qur'an verses and Hadeeth. Most students had acceptable knowledge and understanding of the life of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), Islamic etiquettes, concepts and values as well as their impact on their own lives. Most primary students of Arabic as a first language reached acceptable levels in the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, attainment was unsatisfactory in Arabic as an additional language. While most students could listen and respond in Arabic, their reading and writing skills were less well developed. English attainment was good in the Foundation Stage and acceptable in the primary. Speaking and listening skills were mostly good throughout both stages. Good vocabulary development was a hallmark of the program. However, written skills needed to be a focus in the primary years. Working with number and shape were relatively strong across the school, but mental mathematics and calculations were often underdeveloped. Attainment of students in Key Stage 1 was good, and was better than seen in older classes where a minority of students' attainment was unsatisfactory. Written work was good but investigative skills were underdeveloped, mainly because of insufficient opportunity for students to apply critical thinking. Despite a fully equipped science laboratory, scientific enquiry was the least developed scientific skill.

Students made acceptable progress especially in Qur'an memorisation, Hadeeth, Seerah, Fiqh-laws, Islamic principles and Islamic values. In the Arabic lessons, most students made acceptable, but uneven, progress in Arabic language acquisition. Standard Arabic conversational and writing skills required further development. In the Foundation Stage, most students demonstrated good progress and applied their growing knowledge of English vocabulary in their speaking and listening. Most students in Years 4 to 6 were able to apply vocabulary and rules for writing a newspaper article at acceptable levels. Insufficient challenge for students in the primary phase was a key contributor to slower progress. A focus on practical skills and application of learning to real-life examples helped students develop their mathematical understanding. Overall, however, this was insufficient in the primary phase, where progress was inhibited and a minority of older students made unsatisfactory progress. In science lessons most students made expected progress against the learning objectives set by the teacher.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

About ten per cent of students in the school were Emirati. Across the school their attainment and progress was acceptable overall. In Foundation Stage children made notable progress in listening, speaking, reading and writing, while in science they made equally strong progress in their knowledge and understanding of people and communities, the world and technology. In all other key subjects most Emirati students achieved

broadly in line with other students. The engagement and behaviour of Emirati students in class and around the school was good. Their relationships with teachers were positive and they took pride in their school. Attendance and punctuality patterns were similar to those of their peers and were acceptable. Emirati parents supported the schools values and participated in its events.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good. Students were respectful of teachers and of each other. A majority of them brought healthy snacks to school and most enjoyed physical activity in lessons and voluntary sports clubs. Students were keen to take on periodic classroom duties to assist the teacher and were also excited about their re-constituted School Council. Representatives had commendable plans and recalled some positive influence students had on the school. However, there were insufficient opportunities for students to further develop their leadership skills, including a more independent approach to their own learning. Attendance was acceptable and students' punctuality was good. Across the school, students had age-appropriate understanding of Islamic values, and structures. Students could identify the features of Dubai that have changed over time, and valued its achievements. Students respected UAE heritage and the local culture. They appreciated the multi-cultural nature of their school, and the advantages to learn from friendships across cultures. Students demonstrated acceptable community and environmental understanding. They were beginning to consider ways in which they could contribute to conservation efforts around the school. In lessons in primary they shared their views on recycling, conserving water and electricity and keeping the school tidy. The school council had ambitious plans to encourage greater student involvement in conservation and community support.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was good in Foundation Stage and acceptable in primary. Across the school most teachers had good subject knowledge but in primary a number of teachers did not have sufficient understanding of how children learn. In Foundation Stage teachers supported children's learning by closely matching what they provided to the children's current needs. They encouraged enquiry by asking thoughtful, open-ended questions which encouraged dialogue both with the teacher and with one another. In the primary phase, at times teachers' talk dominated lessons with too little time for student discussion, or independent learning. Consequently, students were often passive. Across the school the pace of lessons varied. In Foundation Stage the wide range of choices offered to students created challenge, demand and active engagement. In many primary lessons tasks were not consistently well matched to the different learning needs of students. Consequently, challenge and progress was often less than was expected. The development of enquiry and critical thinking skills was not a feature of many primary lessons.

The quality of students learning was good in Foundation Stage and acceptable in primary. In Foundation Stage effective lessons featured a range of activities that generated active, engaged and interested children, working independently. They used manipulative, interactive and physical materials as they worked and linked concepts to real-life situations, events and objects. Teachers encouraged enquiry by asking questions that prompted children to classify, analyse, predict or create. This ensured maximum involvement, thinking and articulation. Students in the primary phase were capable of independent and co-operative group work, but were given too few opportunities to do this. Research, enquiry and critical thinking were seldom used to challenge or extend these students.

Assessment was good in Foundation Stage and acceptable in primary. In Foundation Stage teachers observed children as they interacted in their play, everyday activities and planned activities. Records of children's achievement helped identify children's progress. Children's progress was tracked periodically, reviewed and a summary shared with their parents. In the primary phase teachers marked students' books carefully and regularly provided suggestions for improvement. Individual learning targets were being developed. A data management system collated internal test results, but these were not used to identify possible areas in which to challenge and extend students' current learning and development. The school had not adopted rigorous external benchmarking to measure student performance against international standards. Student self and peer-review have not yet been incorporated into the school's assessment programme.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum reflected the good breadth and balance of the National Curriculum of England and Wales and recently revised frameworks and strategies. Good planning and extended topics enabled both skills and cross-curricular development. In Foundation Stage there was also a balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. A recent major curriculum review resulted in extensive innovation and improvement which included the successful inclusion of the new Foundation Stage curriculum and the introduction of a social and emotional aspects of learning programme. This helped support students' personal development. Progression and continuity was generally well planned, but not at key transition points where children transferred to Year 1 and when students left the school. Students' needs in the teaching groups from Year 3 to Year 6 were sometimes not sufficiently met. Generally, the curriculum broadly met most students' needs and interests. However, it was under-developed for higher achieving students and those students who were gifted and talented. The curriculum was enriched through well-attended after-school clubs, a developing programme of visitors to the school, and various educational visits. This included a residential trip for older children. The school's links with other schools and some businesses was limited and needed to be further developed.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements were securely in place. Contracts for maintenance and safety items were accessible. The school was clean and well-maintained. The school clinic was orderly and well-staffed with a full-time nurse and a doctor contracted for two hours on each of two days a week. Medicines and records were up-to-date and secure. Arrival and dismissal procedures were improved from the previous inspection. Buses and automobiles were separated and a one-way system was in place. Students were met at their classrooms by parents or drivers and no students were permitted outside of the building without supervision. Most staff had first aid training and all physical education instructors had life-saving certification. A comprehensive child protection policy was shared with families on the school's website.

Very good staff-student relationships enabled teachers to know, support and generally guide their students very well. The few incidents of misbehaviour and rare lateness that occurred were managed appropriately. Unreported absences were checked immediately. Attendance was acceptable and the school recognised and rewarded achievements in this area. However, attendance information was not fully used to promote improvement. There was widespread promotion of students' personal development, their welfare and healthy lifestyles, but this was not systematically tracked. The school effectively monitored the food students brought to school. There was very limited guidance provided to support students leaving the school.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school provision for students designated with special educational needs was acceptable and had recently become a school priority. The school policy was open and inclusive and current systems to identify special educational needs were acceptable. They fully involved parents and students in developing and reviewing their individual plans and were supported well by a specialist provider. However, the screening of all students was incomplete because there was insufficient expertise and staffing to accurately identify all student needs. Therefore, the needs of all students were not fully addressed. Students designated with special educational needs made variable progress in their key subjects, but overall, this was acceptable. Teachers tracked the students' progress regularly, but lacked sufficient knowledge to fully support all areas of their development.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. The school had its third Principal in eight months so the school's vision and direction were being realigned. The Acting Principal displayed a good understanding of the school's program. Leadership responsibilities were shared with the primary manager. Relationships with the school community were judged as good by parents in both the survey and parent interviews. The leadership demonstrated the capacity to lead the school to improved learning and innovation.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was acceptable. The action plan addressed the recommendations from the previous inspection. However, changes in leadership had not permitted the plans to become imbedded practice. Self-evaluation was thorough but outcomes were not accurate in all areas. Monitoring of staff was in place. The school was showing improvement over time.

Relationships with parents and the community were good. The survey of parents showed that they judged the relationships between the school and parents as much improved over the recent months. The openness of staff was welcomed by parents. Communication was good and informative. Parents felt the school was well-led. However, they did express concern about the constant changing of the leadership and staff that had left the school and had yet to be replaced.

Governance of the school was judged as acceptable. The governance had seen that all compliance issues with the Ministry of Education from the previous report had been addressed. Governance supported the school with professional development opportunities and expressed support for the Acting Principal and her vision. No parents were represented on the governing board.

The management, facilities and resources were judged, overall, as good. The day-to-day management of the school was handled well and contracts for upkeep and safety were all in place and up-to-date. There was an adequate number of class teachers but specialist positions such as music and library were unfilled. The facilities were good and maintenance was performed as necessary. A wide range of information and communications technology and other resources supported learning throughout the school. Computer and science laboratories were modern and well equipped but under-utilised.

[View judgements](#)

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents and teachers 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	88	42%
	Last year	106	47%
Teachers	21		78%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

Overall, the on-line survey indicated that most parents and staff were highly satisfied with the school. English was judged to be the most effective of the key subjects while Arabic as an additional language caused the most concern. Communications with the school was rated highly by most respondents who cited improving access and availability of staff with the new leadership. A few parents stated that additional extra-curricular activities would be welcomed. Also, parents of children with special educational needs indicated that, in almost all cases, their children were well supported and cared for. A minority of parents felt their child was overlooked. Parents felt positive about the current direction of the school, particularly noting the increased involvement of parents in the activities of the school.

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

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