

INSPECTION REPORT

International School of Arts and Sciences

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT International School of Arts and Sciences

Location	Al Warqaa
Type of school	Private
Website	www.isas.sch.ae
Telephone	04-2800459
Address	PO. Box 35901, Al Warqa, Dubai
Principal	Muhieddine Soubra, محي الدين سوبرا
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	750
Largest nationality group of students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	234 (31%)
Date of the inspection	5th to 7th November 2012

Contents

The context of the school	3
Overall school performance 2012-2013	3
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 good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	9
How well does the school provide for Emirati students?.....	9
How good is the students' personal and social development?	10
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	10
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	11
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	12
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	12
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	12
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	14
What happens next?	15
How to contact us	15

The context of the school

The International School of Arts and Sciences serves a largely Arab community. About 31 per cent of the students were Emirati. The current year had seen a change of student population of about 40 per cent.

The school offered a US curriculum, and had participated in international examinations. A total of 20 students had been identified as having special educational needs, some of whom were physically handicapped. Provision for them included a full-time staff member and some auxiliary staff.

At the time of the inspection, approximately 30 per cent of the staff were new. Almost all held a first degree, but many did not have a teaching qualification.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The improvements in students' personal and social development;
- The care shown to all students, fostering their sense of belonging and security;
- The procedures for ensuring the health and safety of all students.

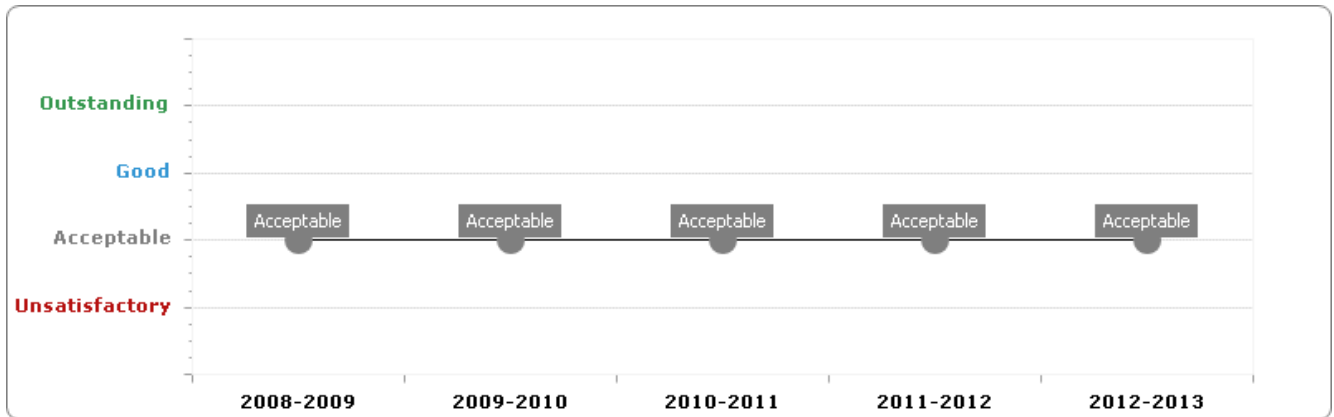
Recommendations

- Improve students' attainment and progress by providing more effective teaching and learning techniques;
- Ensure that assessment procedures are rigorous;
- Analyse assessment information to improve planning and thus meet students' learning needs;
- Improve the monitoring of teaching quality by school leaders;
- Procedures for self-evaluation should be made valid, comprehensive and reliable, and should lead to improvements.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school had made progress in promoting students' personal and social development;
- The time allotted for Islamic Education now met statutory requirements;
- Although procedures to improve punctuality had been put in place, students' lateness was still a considerable problem for the school;
- Unsatisfactory progress had been made in addressing the other recommendations in the report.

Trend of overall performance



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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
English				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	Good

[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?

Children's attainment was good in the Kindergarten and mainly acceptable in the other phases of the school.. In Islamic Education, most students demonstrated acceptable levels of understanding of key Islamic concepts and rulings, and interpreted Qur'anic verses accurately. Students' recitation skills, however, were underdeveloped. In Arabic as a first or additional language, most students' listening and reading skills were secure. Their speaking and writing skills were developing more slowly. In English, students exceeded the expected levels of attainment in listening, speaking and reading. Here, too, writing was the weakest skill. Children in the Kindergarten had developed good knowledge and understanding of number and applied it well. They learnt about scientific concepts and developed scientific skills, such as prediction and close observation. Elsewhere, the development of scientific skills, and especially enquiry, was limited.

Progress was good in the Kindergarten and mainly acceptable in other phases of the school. In Islamic Education, progress was limited in the recitation of Qur'an. In Arabic as a first or additional language, students made slower progress in speaking and writing than in other aspects. Progress in English was strong, especially in middle and high school, but not when writing. Children made good progress in all aspects of science and mathematics in the Kindergarten. Elsewhere, the progress of the most able students was inconsistent and students needed greater challenge, especially in applying their scientific and mathematical skills. Students with special educational needs made acceptable progress in classes and good progress when taught by specialist staff. In mainstream classes though, their progress was limited.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The attainment and progress of Emirati students were acceptable. Emirati children started school with attainment slightly below that of others, especially the boys in Arabic and mathematics. Students made good progress in English. Progress in writing was slower to develop than other skills. Students also made good progress in science and mathematics in the Kindergarten, and in Arabic in the elementary grades. The few students identified as having moderate special educational needs made acceptable progress. Attendance was good, apart from the Kindergarten and Grade 2, where it was below average.

A few students had too casual attitudes to punctuality throughout the day. Emirati students had positive attitudes to learning, although older boys from all backgrounds occasionally became restless when they were not engaged by their lessons. They were well prepared for the future by the comprehensive guidance provided by the school.

Emirati parents engaged well with the school; for example, supporting the school council to raise money for charity. Three members of the Board of Governors were Emirati. Parents received adequate information on their children's progress.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good across the school. Almost all were positive and keen to learn. At all phases there was a strong commitment to the school with the associated good behaviour. Relationships between teachers and students were very relaxed and mutually respectful. In a few lessons, particularly in the high school, the behaviour of a few boys did not reach the school's expected standard. While attendance was good across the school, not all senior students arrived punctually to school and class. Students showed respect and tolerance. They demonstrated good understanding of Islamic values, and showed good appreciation of the relevance of those values to life in Dubai. Students were well aware of local traditions, recognised their importance to contemporary society and celebrated them wholeheartedly. They had good understanding of the multi-cultural life of Dubai. Students contributed eagerly to the life of the school through the student council and clubs. Older students were well aware of their developing responsibilities as citizens. Throughout, they had good attitudes to work and enjoyed school life. Participation in extra-curricular activities was high. They showed good understanding of environmental sustainability.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was of acceptable quality across the school. Most teachers had good subject knowledge. Effective teaching resulted when there were well planned activities accessible to all groups of students. Such lessons usually incorporated opportunities for independent learning and enquiry, providing activities where students took responsibility for their learning. Teachers' questioning strategies were not fully effective. Only a minority of teachers could use questions skillfully to enhance understanding. The majority used closed questions, which reduced the opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills and provide well-reasoned answers. When lessons were less effective, the work was not matched to the needs of all groups of students in the class. The level of challenge was not always appropriate to allow students to reach their potential in the time available. The limited variety of teaching strategies led too often to teachers dominating lessons. This over-direction encouraged students to become too reliant on teachers

and less willing to take charge of their learning. Teachers used information and communications technology, but rarely with creativity to excite students' interest.

Learning was of acceptable quality. Most students demonstrated confidence in their learning. They were made aware of the links to real-life situations. When given the chance to work in groups or independently, they took on the responsibilities well. Most were willing to share their skills and knowledge with peers, recognising the value of these interactions. Most were respectful of others and responsive when the teaching was good. However, students often passively accepted being directed by the teacher and did not show enough enthusiasm to apply themselves to the tasks set.

The assessment of learning was acceptable throughout the school. The school had a system which ensured that all students' attainment and progress were tracked. The information was used to identify areas for improvement and allowed teachers to inform students about their overall performance. This formal process provided information based on the summative assessments. However, the data was not sufficiently well analysed in order to provide accurate, informed guidance on students' performance. There were examples of effective on-going assessment, which were mainly oral. Teachers' marking of work was often restricted to correction without suggestions for improvement. There was little evidence of students being allowed to assess their own work, or of activities involving peer assessment.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good overall and reflected similar curricula in the US. It provided a broad and balanced education throughout. Grade 11 students who were working towards a school diploma benefited from the planned progression and the imaginative array of practical subjects. Forensics, nutrition, pre-medicine, pre-business, elements of writing, advanced French, music composition and Latin jazz supported the key subjects and provided choice. Regular systematic review was evident in the recent Kindergarten curriculum modifications, where a thematic approach had been introduced. Opportunities for child-initiated free play and exploration were restricted. Cross-curricular links were evident in science lessons and in many lesson plans. A strong and balanced after-school activities programme provided good extra-curricular opportunities. There was scope for the introduction of US curriculum standards into the curriculum to ensure greater challenge and increased opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking. The progression of learning in senior biology, chemistry and physics was restricted by the timetable.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provisions for students' health and safety were outstanding. There were excellent arrangements to ensure the safety and welfare of students at all times. Premises and facilities were maintained to a very high standard with premises adapted for those with special educational needs. The quality of maintenance and record-keeping was meticulous and thorough. Healthy living was strongly promoted. All staff members needed to become aware of the child protection policy and to remain vigilant in areas of potential risk including, for example, the swimming pool area.

The quality of support for students was good across all phases. There were good staff-student relationships and good behaviour management systems. All teachers were involved in monitoring the well-being and personal development of students, with a system whereby teachers were assigned to look after individual students in every class. There was effective advice and guidance for senior students. Punctuality in the morning remained a key concern and a priority for improvement.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school had a policy of inclusiveness for students with special educational needs. These students were accurately identified. Those supported by the counsellor made good progress but they were in the minority, and this type of support was restricted. Support for these students in classrooms was limited. It required curriculum modification, better focused individual support, and more effective monitoring and tracking of progress. There were insufficient numbers of specialist staff for effective support of all students with special needs.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was of acceptable quality overall. Leaders were committed to the school and its vision. The Principal's attempts to delegate were praiseworthy, but he did not exercise enough control over the quality of his colleagues' delegated work. Senior leaders were aware that further improvements needed to be made, but they relied too heavily on in-house advice, which limited development. Some subject leaders were shared with two other schools, and could not respond immediately to offer advice and support. Their roles had been reduced to that of administrator rather than innovative curriculum leaders. Others had too great a burden of additional duties, leaving them insufficient time for the improvement of teaching and learning.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were of acceptable quality. While there was regular self-evaluation and a well-developed system to monitor classroom activities, the evaluations were overly optimistic. The evaluation of teaching had not revealed deficiencies which needed to be addressed. The improvement plan was detailed but was based on flawed and inadequate evidence regarding students' achievements. The school's written report on standards and quality was entirely descriptive, with no evaluative comments. The school had made some progress in addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection report, but needed to pursue these to completion. The school was good at developing systems, but weak at evaluating their efficacy.

Partnership with parents and the community was good. Communication with parents was regular and comprehensive. Parents spoke highly of the quality of information which they received. They were kept very well informed of their children's progress. Parents of younger children were given good advice on how to support the development of their children's reading and number skills. Links with other schools were limited and led to a restricted exchange of views. There was scope for extending community links to contribute to students' educational experiences.

Governance of the school was of acceptable quality. The governing body held the Principal accountable but had not been rigorous in its scrutiny of results such as examinations and assessments. Members had accepted reports without detailed analysis statements about performance. They had monitored the school's response to the previous report and had increased the number of teachers of Islamic Education. The governing body had been very effective in promoting the extensive and rich supplementary curricular provision, and in supporting provision of the latest technological devices to students. Parents and local business interests were represented in an advisory capacity, but did not actually sit as members of the governing body. The governing body responded well to the views of parents and students.

Accommodation was of high quality and very well maintained. Resources were equally of high quality. The turnover of teaching staff remained high, to the extent that there was limited continuity in teaching for many students. Thirty teachers were new to the school. Although the school attempted to mitigate this turnover by training, many teachers were unsure about appropriate pedagogical approaches or about the developmental needs of young people. Despite the technological resources for teaching, inspired practice was rare.

[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	117	23%
	Last year	94	25%
Teachers	41		58%
Students	165		79%

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

A minority of parents responded to the survey, about the same response rate as last year. Most believed that their children were making good progress in the key subjects, although they expressed some concerns about Arabic as an additional language. Almost all thought that their children enjoyed school and were safe there. Most believed that behaviour was good. Most considered the school to be well led. Only half thought that they were fully involved in the decision-making process, and a significant number did not know about formal parental links with the school. Only half reported that the school was adequately involved with the community. A slight majority of teachers responded to their survey. Teachers spoke highly about the school and were overwhelmingly supportive of all its activities. A minority reported that the school had not developed sufficient links with the local community. A small number thought that they did not receive enough training. Most senior students responded to their survey. They reported that they were making good progress in all key subjects apart from Arabic as an additional language. Almost half reported that the student body did not have enough involvement in decision-making.

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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