

INSPECTION REPORT

Sharjah American International Private school

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Sharjah American International Private school

Location	Al Warqaa
Type of school	Private
Website	www.saisdubai.net
Telephone	04-2801111
Address	Dubai Al Warqaa 1-P.O.BOX:74455
Principal	Nadine Tarazi
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3 to 18 years / KG 1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1448
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	517 (36 %)
Date of the inspection	24th to 27th February 2014

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The context of the school

Sharjah American International School located in Al Warqaa opened in 2005. The school had an enrolment of 1,448 students representing over 60 nationalities, ages three to 18 years. This represented an increase of 174 students from the previous inspection. The school was divided into four phases: Kindergarten, Elementary, Middle and High School. Students were in mixed classes up through Grade 4, with boys and girls having separate classes from Grade 5 to Grade 12.

The school followed a US curriculum and was in the process of implementing the Common Core State Standards for English and mathematics. Additionally, the state standards from Michigan were being adopted for science, physical education and performing arts. Students sat for the MAPS, TOEFL and IELTS international examinations. Since the last inspection, 81 students had been entered for the SAT examination.

Twenty-three teachers were new to the school this year, comprising 19% of the total teaching staff of 120. The average length of tenure of teachers in the school was 2.9 years. Eighty-five percent of the staff had teaching qualifications. There were 61 classes across all phases of the school.

Twenty-nine students with special educational needs (SEN) were included across all phases reflecting the school's open enrolment policy. Progress towards improving the identification and teaching of students with SEN was a goal of the school. Staff had also been hired to teach gifted and talented students but the programme was in a developmental stage.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Good provision for health and safety;
- High level of parental satisfaction with the quality of communication and easy access to leaders and staff;
- Positive climate of nurturing and caring throughout the school;

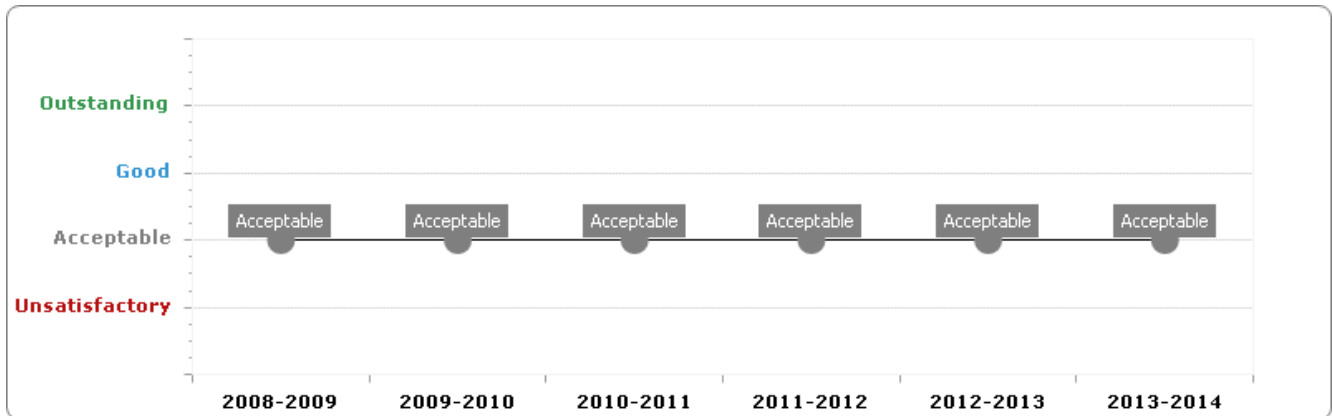
Recommendations

- Improve the attainment and progress of all students;
- Enable teachers to analyse internal and external attainment data to identify gaps in students' knowledge and provide a targeted focus for future learning;
- Expand the curriculum to include more electives, Advance Placement (AP) courses and greater opportunity for independent study;
- Strengthen Arabic and English writing skills across all disciplines
- Use externally validated assessments to moderate the school's own assessments and to give staff, the students and their parents, a realistic view of students' attainment in an international context.

Progress since the last inspection

- Sharjah American International School had begun the adoption and implementation of the Common Core Standards for U.S curriculum schools for English and Math, and the Michigan State Science Standards;
- The school had applied and completed the initial phases of seeking certification as an American Curriculum school with KHDA, and accreditation with New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC);
- Working with an external company, the school had instituted a pilot "Flip Classroom" in some of the upper grades. Students did initial reading and preparation at home using the Internet and other media, and the teachers then served as resources and assisted with homework in the classroom;
- A new recreational area had been installed at the school.

Trend of overall performance



How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	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	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Good	Good	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Good	Good	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first and as an additional language was good in elementary and acceptable in middle and high phases. Most students had secure knowledge about main Islamic principles such as praying and Hajj. They knew the key Islamic behaviours and understood how they are applied. Students in the high school had appropriate knowledge about some social problems from an Islamic perspective. The students in the elementary stage memorised short Surahs from Holy Qur'an. In Arabic as a first language, most students across the school attained levels that were at least in line with curriculum expectations. Listening skills were strong across the school. Writing was the least developed skill in middle and high schools. In Arabic as an additional language, listening was also the strongest skill. Students could read paragraphs aloud after hearing them from their teachers. Their shaping of Arabic script was adequate but their independent writing to express themselves was limited. Attainment in English, mathematics and science was acceptable across all phases except in science in the middle phase which was good. KG students answered questions in English with one word or phrase, while demonstrating good listening skills. Students in the Middle School discussed informational texts and analysed fiction well. Older students were articulate in discourse and presentations. By Grade 3, most students understood the relationship between multiplication and division of whole numbers. In middle school, many students could draw, construct and describe geometrical figures. Students demonstrated at least acceptable knowledge and understanding of main concepts in science through their practical work, discussions, and presentations.

In Islamic Education students made good progress in the elementary phase and acceptable in the middle and high school phases. Students' knowledge of Islamic values and Islamic practice such as ablution, praying and performing Hajj was developing well. Their knowledge and understanding of the Prophet's life was improving. Students were developing their understanding of how to apply their learning of Islamic behaviour in their relationships with others. Middle and high school students, including those studying the subject through the medium of English, made inconsistent progress across the different aspects of Islamic Education. In Arabic as a first language, elementary students made good progress in the four skills of language. Most students in the middle and high schools made acceptable progress in language skills except in extended speaking and writing. Students' oral skills were developing. Progress was most noticeable in script shaping, including handwriting, and in learning new vocabulary. Students' development of how to use language to express ideas was slower. In English, oral language skills showed the greatest strength and advancement over time. Students' progress in reading was inconsistent across year groups, while written language was a developing aspect of English in all phases. In mathematics, progress was evident in the abilities of high school students to prove theorems about angles and triangles. Kindergarten children did not always have good mathematical resources to identify and describe shapes. Student's progress in understanding of main concepts in science ranged from acceptable to good across the phases.

Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were acceptable in the Kindergarten and high school and good in the elementary and middle schools. Most students were motivated to learn and engaged in lessons. They were willing and competent to explain what they were doing, and supported one another in peer interactions. Many students worked productively in groups. Investigation and problem solving were developing, and students in some subjects relied too much on the teachers. Many students could relate new learning to personal experience, particularly in analysing literature. In other subjects a few students made interdisciplinary or real world connections. ICT resources were used minimally, although when students were given the opportunity to use technology they demonstrated age-appropriate skills and high levels of engagement. Research skills were improving, particularly in students in the upper elementary and middle grades. Enquiry and critical thinking skills were a developing feature of learning.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility, and their attitudes and behaviours were good across all phases. Students felt responsible for their own learning which allowed them to be both academically motivated and self-disciplined. They cared a lot for their school and their classmates and showed good levels of respect for adults including teachers, staff, and visitors. They had respectful relationships and worked collaboratively to support one another in learning in many lessons. Students were not fully aware of healthy life style choices. Their behaviour was mainly good, but they were sometimes involved in rough play in playgrounds and in the corridors. Students' attendance was acceptable.

Students demonstrated good understanding and respect to the U.A.E culture and participated in celebrating national events such as UAE National Day. They had good knowledge about the U.A.E heritage including local sports, costume and food. Students respected Islamic values and participated in the Islamic events. They also had secure knowledge about their own and other cultures.

Community and environmental responsibility was acceptable in Kindergarten and good across the other phases. Students were active members of their school. They felt that they had a voice that was heard and demonstrated that they cared for their school. They were able to influence the school's decision-making process through the student council. They had a positive work ethic that had no place for cheating or other unethical issues. Students took the initiative and used their creative ideas to develop projects that had a positive impact on the local community such as collecting donations to help the needy. Although they were

not fully aware of the main environmental issues the world faces, students were able to discuss complex issues such oil and renewable resources and their impact on sustainability in the UAE.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable in Kindergarten and high school and good in elementary and middle schools. Teachers almost always had a strong understanding of their subjects, and many teachers were well aware of how students learn. Some teachers across the school were proficient with high expectations. They used careful planning that included the use of resources and classroom practices that successfully motivated students. However, some teaching did not always lead to improved student learning. Some teachers helped students make connections between what they were learning and the real life applications in their subjects. Collaboration and group work were used across all phases, leading to many students learning to work more independently. The addition of authentic assessment measures was beginning to guide teachers in planning lessons that met students' needs. Teachers and students had positive relationships. Teachers were supportive and interested in helping each student to make progress. The quality of teaching in non-key subjects varied, with the best practices seen when students were able to explore their interests or talents.

Assessment was acceptable across all phases. Students take MAP examinations and those in Grade 11/12 take SAT and either TOEFL or IELTS. The school had begun to apply external standards such as the MAP and the SAT. In these instances the accuracy of assessment data was useful in influencing teaching, the curriculum, and supporting students. In addition, some teachers were using internal assessments to identify students' strengths and weaknesses, and were using this information to guide their teaching to meet different needs. Nevertheless, assessment data was not being used consistently enough across the school to modify curriculum planning and teaching.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good across all phases of the school. The curriculum was aligned with Ministry of Education standards in Arabic and Islamic Education and with common core standards in English and Mathematics. The State of Michigan standards in science were incorporated into the curriculum. The curriculum had a well-considered rationale and showed balance and planning. However opportunities for study beyond the basics were limited as was the opportunity for electives. The curriculum was supported by

detailed curriculum maps. Transition strategies were emerging but were not formalised clearly. The curriculum had undergone a thorough revision and had been updated.

The design of the curriculum to meet the individual needs of students was acceptable in all phases. There was a growing recognition of the different learning needs and abilities of students, including those who were gifted or talented. Almost all students had English as an additional language and the curriculum planning lacked sufficient focus to meet all their needs. Efforts by teachers to modify the curriculum were not consistent and students with additional needs did not always make sufficient progress. The choice of subjects in the senior phases did not allow for all students to express their talents or interests in the arts.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school had good provisions for health and safety. Students were always supervised on campus and on buses. The school building, equipment and resources were all maintained in good condition through scheduled maintenance checks and were suitable for the educational needs of all students. The school's full-time physician and two nurses provided students with good health services and promoted healthy living among them by regularly conducting health education seminars at school. They also kept updated health-related records on all students and stored medicines safely and securely. The canteen served healthy food such as salads and fruits but also offered unhealthy items. The child protection policy was known to all students, teachers, parents, and staff, but it was not sufficiently detailed or clear.

The quality of support was good across all phases. Interactions between staff and students were polite and courteous. Teachers were aware of the need to model respectful behaviour and promote trust and confidence. Punctuality were good and attendance was monitored closely to identify any problems. The school had developed a policy on the inclusion of all students with special education needs. Specialist staff had led the identification process and coordinated a range of effective support. This included individual education plans and strategies to modify the curriculum. The school had expanded its level of support for gifted and talented students. The guidance counsellor had provided guidance to special needs students and their parents. The counsellor has only adequate time to meet students and this is focused on elementary students in particular.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The principal had a working knowledge of the school and understood the path the school needed to follow to improve. Leadership team members had developed a clear vision for the school which was shared with the whole staff. Distributive leadership was modelled by the principal sharing authority and accountability to other members of the leadership team. Procedures to engage staff actively in the management of the school had begun. Communications from the school leaders had been welcomed by staff and parents as open, informative and transparent. The leaders demonstrated the capacity to improve the school. However, aligning teaching with the new requirements of the Common Core Curriculum and Michigan Science Standards required professional development for all staff.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was good. The self-evaluation document addressed all items from the previous report but did not evaluate the school accurately enough in some areas. The accompanying action plan was appropriate but nearly all items were marked as completed although insufficient time had passed to measure the impact of the action on students' learning and classroom practice. Professional development opportunities for staff were available but further high quality workshops were needed to help the implementation of the Common Core Standards and the accompanying changes in teaching strategies. Professional development was linked to the school's priorities but was not clearly driven by the analysis of the successes and shortcomings of the action plan. The impact of school improvement planning was evident in several areas but more needed to be done towards raising students' attainment and progress at selected levels.

Relationships with parents were good. The leaders of the parents' committee were enthusiastic to support and be engaged in all aspects of the school and supported special events to enrich the students' school experience. There were some productive links with the community, for example with local universities and with the Rashid Paediatric Centre for children with disabilities.

Governance was good. The owners and governors developed a tiered level of committees, including parent representation from the Parent's Committee to review and advise in the planning and conduct of school related issues. They reported regularly. The Board of Governors held school leaders accountable for the delivery of the school's vision and action plan goals. They monitored the school improvement planning.

Management of staffing and the day-to-day operations was good. Appropriate contracts and records were maintained. Almost all staff had educational credentials. The school was well maintained and safe. The quality and range of resources was acceptable but there were insufficient ICT resources to encourage and enhance students' active engagement in the classrooms. The school library did not have enough books for the school's population.

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

There were 517 Emirati students in the school at the time of the inspection. Their attainment and progress were acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic except in elementary where it was good. In English, attainment and progress of Emirati students were below the class average sometimes due to their arrival at the school part way through the programme. For example, their reading and writing skills were still developing but they had better speaking skills. In science and math, students attainment and progress levels were similar to those of other students. In high school, good progress was consistent in math for Emirati students. Emirati students' attitudes and behaviour were good. Older students took the initiative to have a greater leadership role in the school, such as in community services, anti-drug awareness campaign, as well as international young leaders club. The school had good links with the parents of Emirati students and met them regularly.

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

The identification of students with special educational needs (SEN) commenced with the observations of class teachers followed by referrals for assessment if necessary. The school had appointed extra learning support staff and a coordinator for gifted and talented students to provide support. The SEN support team gave guidance to parents on how to support their children and involved parents in discussions about their children's progress. Heads of departments monitored progress but modification of the curriculum was inconsistent. However, some good progress was noted in Arabic, English and in ICT. An enrichment programme was in place for gifted and talented students up to Grade 3, which challenged these students and expanded the breadth of the core school curriculum. The coordinators had had a considerable workload of teaching and managing provision. They had insufficient time to develop the identification of a wider range of students and to work closely with specialists in the school for English as an additional language.

How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?

Teachers of Arabic as a first language had good subject knowledge. However, a significant proportion of teachers, particularly in middle and high schools were unclear of how students learn best and frequently used ineffective teaching methods. Teachers had detailed lesson plans, but in implementation, many activities and assessment strategies were not carried out. In Elementary, teachers offered good levels of challenge for their students as well as linking learning objectives to clear success criteria. Most used a wide range of strategies, activities and resources to enhance learning. In the high school, teachers' presentations

were usually clear and frequently supported by use of ICT which raised the students' interest levels. However, a few teachers did not provide sufficient opportunities for independent learning. In a significant proportion of lessons in middle and high schools, teachers did not ensure that all students were developing their language skills.

The curriculum was based on MoE standards and the Arabic Department made a few modifications and enrichments to cater for students' different needs. Some additional classes were devoted to low attaining students who recently joined the school, particularly from homes where little Arabic was spoken. In middle and secondary schools, the curriculum was heavily dominated by the teaching of grammar and was not focused enough on filling in gaps in learning for many students. There were limited opportunities to develop creative writing skills particularly in the upper grades.

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	127	14%
	Last year	70	10%
Teachers	115		88%
Students	93		41%

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

Only a small proportion of parents responded to the survey. A minority of students and most teachers responded to their questionnaires. Overall, the survey results were mostly positive. Most parents expressed satisfaction with the school and school leadership. In written comments, a few parents referred to suggestions from the school for tutoring for their students. Greater challenge for brighter students was mentioned as an area in need of attention. Some students felt there were insufficient activities and curricular choices. Students also discussed changing the existing class schedule so they may pass to other classes instead of the teachers coming to them. A few students mentioned bullying but it was not listed as a major issue in the school. School bus issues were cited but again, it was not an overriding concern. Most teachers were supportive of the school and the leadership. A few staff mentioned inconsistencies in assessment systems and the need for more training in effective methods to incorporate students with SEN into the classrooms.

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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