

Inspection Report



Horizons English School

2014-2015



إكسبو 2020
جهاز الإمارات العربية المتحدة
DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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School information



General information

Location	Safa 1
Type of school	Private
Opening year of school	1989
Website	www.horizonschooldubai.com
Telephone	04-3422891
Address	P O Box 6749, Dubai
Acting Principal	Helen Black
Language of instruction	English
Inspection dates	3 rd - 5 th November 2014



Students

Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age range	3 - 11
Grades or year groups	Foundation Stage 1 - Year 6
Number of students on roll	665
Number of children in FS1	101
Number of Emirati students	7
Number of students with SEN	60
Largest nationality group of students	British



Teachers / Support staff

Number of teachers	44
Largest nationality group of teachers	British
Number of teacher assistants	13
Teacher-student ratio	23
Number of guidance counsellors	3
Teacher turnover	21%



Curriculum

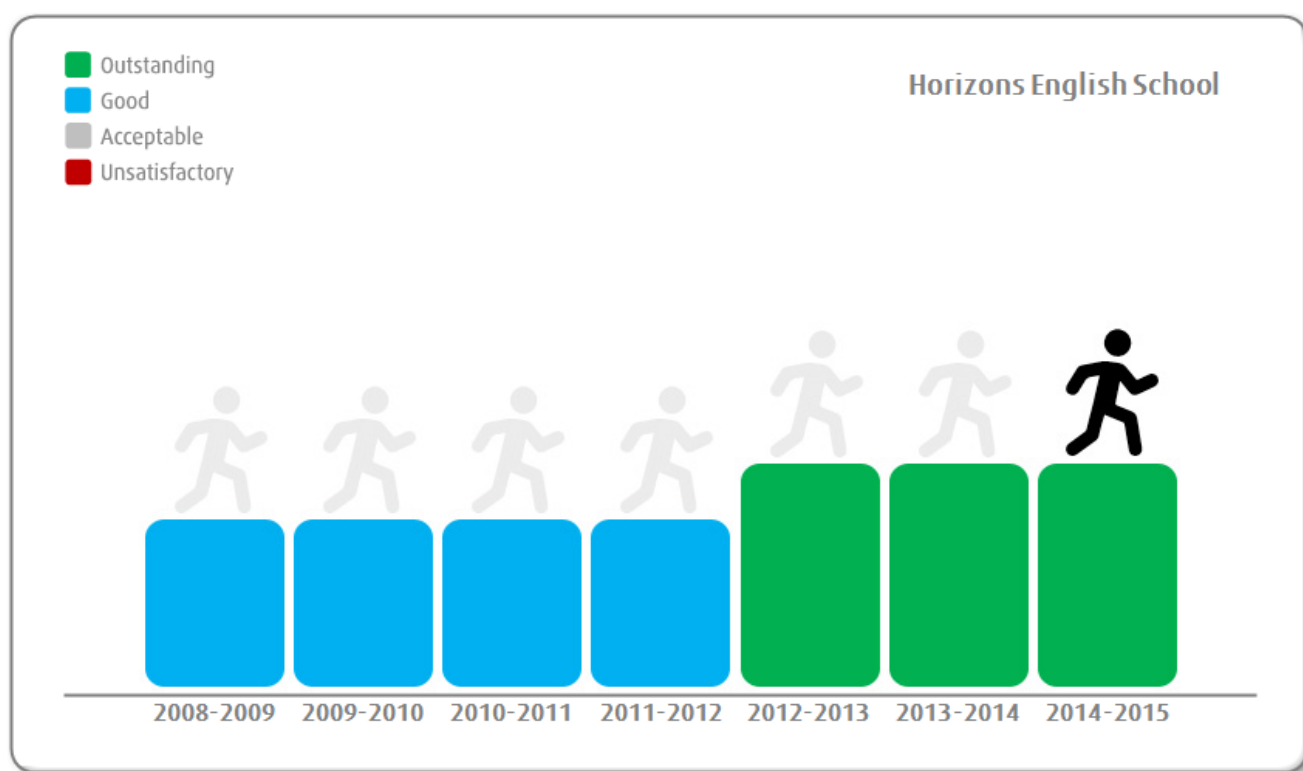
Educational Permit	UK
Main Curriculum / Other	UK
Standardised tests / board exams	International Benchmark Tests (IBT)/ English SATs
Accreditation	British Schools Overseas (BSO) BSME/BBG



Dear Parents,

Horizons English School was inspected by DSIB from 3rd - 5th November 2014, and the overall quality of education provided by the school was found to be **Outstanding**

In order to judge the overall quality of education provided by the school, inspectors considered six key aspects of the school's performance and standards. Inspectors looked at children's attainment and progress in five key subjects, their learning skills as well as their personal and social development. They judged how effective teaching was across the school. Inspectors considered how well the school's curriculum, including activities inside and outside the classroom, met the educational needs of all children. They judged how well the school protected and supported children. In addition inspectors judged the effectiveness of leadership and governance, including management, staffing, facilities and resources.



The inspection judgements were drawn from a range of evidence gathered by the inspection team, including observing children learning in lessons, looking at their work, talking with children, meetings with staff, parents and governors, and reviewing the parents' and teachers' surveys.

The key strengths and areas for improvement to be made by the school leaders, governors and owners are:

Strengths

- Children's attainment and progress in all core subjects were outstanding in the Foundation Stage.
- Students demonstrated outstanding learning skills, and personal and social development.
- Assessment procedures, the curriculum and arrangements for protecting and supporting students, particularly for students with special educational needs, were outstanding.
- The work of school leaders was highly impressive, including their partnership with parents.
- The governing board demonstrated an outstanding commitment to improving staffing, facilities and resources.

Areas for improvement

- Improve students' progress in Islamic Education and in all aspects of Arabic language skills so that it is as good as in other subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it consistently matches the best found in the school.

We warmly encourage you to read the full school inspection report.

The school is required to submit to DSIB an action plan identifying the steps they will take to address the areas for improvement. We have advised your school leaders to share this with you.

We trust that the information provided will help you understand, and encourages you to support, your child's school.

Yours sincerely,

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority**

A closer look at Horizons English School



How well does the school perform overall?

Overall, Horizons English School provided an **Outstanding** quality of education for its students.

- Students' attainment and progress were outstanding in all subjects in the Foundation Stage. In the primary phase, they were mostly good except in mathematics where attainment was outstanding. The weakest subjects were Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. In Arabic as a second language, students' progress was good.
- Students were enthusiastic learners. They enjoyed working in groups but could also work independently. They saw a purpose to their work when solving real-life problems. In a few lessons, they were not given the opportunity to use these skills.
- Students were very well behaved, courteous and hard-working. They had a better understanding of their own cultures than of the culture of Dubai and the United Arab Emirates. They cared very much for their environment, for the community and for each other.
- Teaching methods were effective in most lessons. Most teachers ensured lessons were enjoyable and interesting, and enabled students, including those with special educational needs, to make at least good, and often outstanding, progress. The school provided a rich and diverse range of activities to interest and engage students.
- Arrangements for protecting and supporting students were very effective in looking after their social, emotional and physical needs as well as their academic development.
- The new Acting Principal, and other school leaders, were having a highly positive impact on improving the school. The governing board was committed to supporting them in their work.



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

- Students with special educational needs made at least good, and often outstanding, progress in their learning, particularly in relation to their personal, social and emotional development. As a result, they were exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- The excellent systems for identifying, screening and monitoring and reviewing the needs of students with special educational needs meant that they were effectively supported and achieved well.
- The curriculum was modified appropriately and precisely to provide students with a personalised learning programme and, on occasion, targeted support.

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

		Foundation Stage	Primary
 Islamic Education	Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
	Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable
 Arabic as a First Language	Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
	Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable
 Arabic as an Additional Language	Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
	Progress	Not Applicable	Good
 English	Attainment	Outstanding	Good
	Progress	Outstanding	Good
 Mathematics	Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
	Progress	Outstanding	Good
 Science	Attainment	Outstanding	Good
	Progress	Outstanding	Good
		Foundation Stage	Primary
Learning skills		Outstanding	Outstanding


↑ Improved from last inspection

↓ Declined from last inspection


2. How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding

3. How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Good 	Good
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Outstanding	Outstanding 

5. How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding

6. How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	All phases
The effectiveness of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
Parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Outstanding
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding



School
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Report

Overall school judgement

Outstanding

Key strengths


- Children made outstanding attainment and progress in the Foundation Stage in English, mathematics and science. Students' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science in the primary phase were at least good.
- Students' had highly developed learning skills, excellent attendance and outstanding personal and social development.
- Assessment procedures, the curriculum and arrangements for protecting and supporting students, especially for those with special educational needs, were outstanding.
- The leaders of the school strongly promoted a vision to enhance and enrich the learning experience for all students, which was shared by staff. Leaders ensured effective and efficient day-to-day running of the school, and a committed partnership with parents.
- The governors were very committed to improving staffing, facilities and resources.

Changes since the last inspection

- The new Acting Principal had been promoted from within the school and a new vice-principal had been recruited.
- The senior leadership team and middle leaders had been revised and restructured.
- The student population had increased by 30 per cent.
- New teachers had been appointed to reflect the increase in population. In total, there were 22 teachers new to the school.
- The size of the Foundation Stage had increased from four to ten classes. Only one of the original teachers remained.
- A new building had opened to accommodate the increase in the number of students.
- Students were represented on the governing board.

Recommendations

- Accelerate students' progress in all subjects in the primary phase, especially in Islamic Education and in all aspects of Arabic language skills, by raising expectations of what students are capable of achieving.
- Ensure consistency in the quality of teaching across the school by sharing the existing outstanding practice to facilitate students' learning in all subjects.

 Improved from last inspection

 Declined from last inspection

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

Foundation Stage

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic Education	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as a First Language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an Additional Language	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
English	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Children made outstanding progress from their starting points in speaking and listening. They attained high standards in phonics. Writing was at an early stage of development.
- Children accurately counted small groups of objects using 1 to 1 correspondence. Almost all children used everyday language to talk about age-appropriate mathematical concepts and to solve simple problems.
- Almost all children enjoyed investigating and exploring the learning environment through play. They talked about why things happen and how things work. For example, children eagerly discussed how dry flour and water become sticky dough.

Primary

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic Education	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a First Language	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an Additional Language	Acceptable	Good
English	Good	Good
Mathematics	Outstanding	Good
Science	Good	Good

- In Islamic Education, most students' knowledge of the five pillars of Islam and the steps of prayer was in line with expectations for their age. Their skills in recitation, using Hadith or Qur'an points of reference, were less well developed. Their progress was strong in understanding the Islamic values and morals, and their knowledge of Islamic concepts was developing reasonably well.
- In Arabic as a first language, most students listened well and their speaking skills were acceptable. They could decode simple words when reading. Writing was limited to familiar pre-learnt letters, words and phrases.
- In Arabic as an additional language, most students had a strong listening skills, their speaking skills were acceptable while writing and reading were limited to the familiar pre-learnt letters, words or phrases. Their progress in listening and responding for the majority of students was above expectation. However, it was slower in writing and reading skills.

- Phonics development in English in the lower primary phase was outstanding. Students spoke confidently using a wide range of vocabulary. They read fluently and with expression. Writing was improving. Students enjoyed writing for a variety of purposes and audiences. Standards in spelling, punctuation and grammar were good. Older students analysed and interpreted texts well and empathised with characters.
- Progress in mathematics was inconsistent in the lower years but better in Years 5 and 6, where it accelerated. Most students used their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts to solve real-life problems; for example, older students calculated the percentage increase in the values of the shares they had purchased on the school's fictitious stock market.
- In science, students were curious about the world around them. They carried out research about the physical world and the human body, and conducted their own scientific experiments.

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Learning skills	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students were enthusiastic about learning. They could work independently and, when given the opportunity, enjoyed working with their classmates sharing their ideas in pairs and small groups. They could give and receive constructive feedback on their work. • Their learning was enriched by working on real-life situations. • In subjects such as science and mathematics, students carried out investigations very well and used technology to research topics and to solve problems. • Most students were able to explain their thinking and justify their answers to searching questions. Older students were increasingly confident in asking their own questions to deepen their understanding and extend their learning. • In a few lessons, when students were not sufficiently challenged, their learning skills were not developed well. 		


2. How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students demonstrated exemplary behaviour across the school. They exhibited a very positive attitude and a high level of responsibility towards their own learning. They took great advantage of teachers' feedback and made prompt modifications to improve their learning. • Students were courteous and self-disciplined requiring little or no adult supervision. Their behavior was excellent. • Students respected their teachers and each other. They were active and supportive of each other and were sensitive to others' needs. • Almost all students adopted a healthy life-style opting for healthy snacks and participating in a range of sporting activities. • Students' enjoyment of school life was reflected in their excellent attendance and punctuality. 		

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across both phases, students' appreciation of the impact of Islamic values on modern life in Dubai was outstanding. • Students respected and appreciated the heritage and culture of the United Arab Emirates. • They had a very strong understanding of their own culture and the cultures of other students in the school. However, their understanding of the Emirati culture was less well developed. 		

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older students demonstrated a strong sense of belonging to the school community. They showed exceptional awareness of the needs of others within and beyond the local community. • They made a positive contribution during assembly. The students' council was influential in bringing about change; they made presentations to the governing board and their opinions had a positive impact on the school's development. • Almost all students demonstrated an excellent work ethic. They played main role in the recycle project which is taking place in the school. 		


3. How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Good 	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science was good in both phases because teachers used their good subject knowledge to make learning exciting. In Islamic Education and Arabic, teaching was on occasion less effective and hindered students' progress and attainment. • Most lessons had a clear structure and teachers' good subject knowledge was used well to question students, to assess how well they understood their learning and to promote lively discussions. • Relationships were of a high quality and underpinned the very positive learning atmosphere in lessons. This gave students the confidence to share their ideas in group situations and supported their quiet, focused, independent work. • In a few lessons, teachers did not make good use of the wealth of assessment information which was available. Consequently, their expectations were not closely matched to the abilities and needs of different groups in the class. • Teachers promoted good enquiry skills and encourage students to question, explore and research in subject areas. • Teaching of Arabic as a first language was acceptable. In the best lessons, teachers had high expectations for students of all abilities. This was not consistent in all lessons and so some students were not sufficiently challenged. 		

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school used the information on students' progress and attainment very effectively in almost all respects. School leaders analysed examination results to identify areas where improvements could be made in provision. • External benchmarking and moderation is a strength in the school and a link with local schools is used well for moderation and testing of levels of progress and attainment amongst the schools. • Students' progress data is well recorded, used regularly to adapt the curriculum and to inform lesson planning across year groups. • Teachers and learning support staff knew their students very well and they regularly reviewed their progress. Those not doing as well as they could were quickly identified and additional support was provided to help them make better progress. • Although teachers were well informed about students' achievements, this information was not used consistently well in all lessons to plan tasks that fully stretched students. 		

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school had a clear rationale for the curriculum. It aimed to develop confident, independent and life-long learners and to foster in students a love of learning and a desire to develop respectful, articulate and tolerant relationships with others. • A broad and well-balanced range of learning experiences was planned to enable students to gain knowledge and deepen their understanding by applying their skills to real-life problems and contexts. • With the support of highly-skilled and qualified teaching and support staff, students used the very latest technologies and facilities to enhance their learning. They also benefited from a wide range of enrichment activities, such as trips and visitors, to develop their appreciation of living and working in UAE and global contexts. • Activities enabled students to be independent learners and enquirers who could carry out research and apply critical thinking to their learning across the curriculum. As a result, they were very well prepared for the next phase of education within and beyond the school. • The curriculum was reviewed and systematically developed to ensure it continued to be effective in meeting students' academic and personal development. Students were regularly involved in the review process, sharing their own ideas with their teachers about what they would like to learn. • The curriculum for Arabic as a first language followed the Ministry of Education textbooks with little opportunity for enrichment. This resulted in attainment being no better than in line with expectations for their age. 		

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Outstanding	Outstanding 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school promoted the holistic development of its students through its strong ethos and inclusive culture. The curriculum was highly effective in providing a rich and diverse range of learning experiences where students could apply their learning in various real-life contexts. Using an extensive variety of specialist resources and through external partnerships and enrichment activities, staff effectively modified the curriculum to meet the different needs of all groups of students, particularly those with special educational needs. There was considerable flexibility and innovation in the way the curriculum was designed to enable students to benefit from a highly personalised range of learning experiences. Students flourished in their learning, and had every opportunity to thrive. An extensive range of extra-curricular learning experiences, inclusion and booster workshops meant that students were given every opportunity to be successful in their learning and development at school. The school provided one lesson per week for Arab students in the Foundation Stage. These lessons ranged from 20 minutes in Foundation Stage1 to 40 minutes in Foundation Stage 2. 		

5. How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Health and safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child protection policy and procedures were in place and known by staff. The site was safe and secure with guards on duty at both front gates. Visitors had to be approved, signed in and wear identification. Health and accident records were in place and kept up to date. Risk assessments were reviewed regularly and evacuation plans were well rehearsed. The buildings were spacious, clean, bright and well-ventilated. They facilitated accessibility for those with additional physical needs through ramps, lifts and wide corridors. The new school nurse was pro-active in educating students about healthy life-styles and worked in close partnership with parents to promote their children's physical and emotional development. 		

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Quality of support	Outstanding	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Morale across the school was high as a result of the positive relationships between staff, students and parents. Teachers rarely had to remind students about expectations for behaviour because they were so well behaved almost all of the time. Systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality were very effective. Systems for accurately identifying, screening, monitoring and reviewing the needs of students with special educational needs were exemplary. 		

- The school provided very effective support for all students. They were nurtured, cared for, guided and challenged to achieve their very best. Consequently, students had high levels of confidence in their teachers and the support staff.
- The school welcomed students of all abilities and with a range of additional needs, and valued them as individuals.

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

	Overall
The overall effectiveness of provision for students with special educational needs	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school benefited from a highly qualified and skilled special educational needs coordinator who was dedicated and committed to ensuring a holistic approach to students' development. She made every effort to ensure the academic and personal development needs of all students were met. Effective use was made of external specialists, where appropriate, to provide additional enhanced support • Systems were rigorous and processes meticulous and detailed. Individual learning plans were set with appropriately challenging targets. These were routinely reviewed, updated and shared with teachers, support staff and parents. • The curriculum was modified appropriately and precisely to provide students with personalised learning support and at times a personalised approach to the curriculum. • The school worked exceptionally well with parents to ensure they were wholly satisfied with the quality of education their children received and the information they received from the school. Parents were involved at every stage and were kept informed daily of any aspects of support which required parental involvement or response. They were grateful for the wealth of information they received from staff and the daily contact they had with school leaders regarding their children's learning and development. • Students with special educational needs made at least good, and often outstanding progress, in their learning across the school, particularly in relation to their personal, social and emotional development. As a result, they were very well prepared for the next stage in their learning. 	

6. How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Overall
The effectiveness of leadership	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'Horizon' vision was embedded and shared by staff, students, parents and governors. The transition from the previous Principal to the new Acting Principal and new senior leadership team had been seamless. The Principal and vice-Principal maintained a high profile around school and were accessible to staff, students and parents. They were working hard to promote greater transparency as a means of further developing trust, respect and partnership amongst all members of the school community. • The new vice-Principal had brought innovative ideas and systems to further develop provision and to hold teachers to account for students' achievements. • The special needs coordinator was very effective in leading her department in support of students with additional needs. Subject leadership had been devolved to middle leaders at year-group level. Leaders were increasingly effective in monitoring the work of teams. There was still more work to be done to develop new staff to ensure greater consistency in teaching the Horizon way. Middle leaders embraced the opportunities for professional development to improve their leadership skills. • There was mutual respect amongst the senior leadership team and staff, and morale was high. Teams worked effectively to solve problems and address issues. • This recent track record of leading the school effectively through a potentially challenging time was evidence of a strong capacity to improve the school further in the future. 	

	Overall
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school knew itself very well and used a wealth of assessment data, both internal and external, to evaluate its performance and the effectiveness of provision in meeting the needs of all students. • The senior leadership team consulted with staff, students and parents and considered their responses when identifying priorities for improvement. • In line with the planned growth in student numbers, governors anticipated the need for succession planning, and had appointed a new Acting Principal well in advance who succeeded the former Principal when the new building opened. Similarly, the recruitment process for additional teachers and support staff had started at an early stage. • The new Acting Principal and senior leadership team allowed no room for complacency. Despite the significant number of new teachers who had been at the school for two months, the overall quality of teaching remained good. 	



	Overall
Parents and the community	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school valued and appreciated the support of parents and they welcomed the opportunities to be included and involved as visitors and voluntary helpers. Parents had a genuine voice in school which was heard, not least of all, through representation on the governing board. Channels of communication were clear, varied and two way. Parents appreciated the opportunities for discussing children's progress but would have welcomed more. There were effective partnerships with other schools, especially with most of the secondary schools that students would attend after Year 6. The 'Friends of Horizon' group supported the school in organising community events and celebrations as well as in raising funds for various local charities and worthy causes. 	

	Overall
Governance	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The governing board was fully representative of the community and was made up of parents, owners, staff, students and the local community. They were all consulted about the school's performance and account was taken of their views when appropriate. Robust discussions took place during meetings with governors asking increasingly searching questions about the school's performance. They were involved to a greater extent in the school improvement process with regard to standards, the targets set for the National Agenda and the planned growth of the student population. The governing board had been pro-active in planning for growth and change. They ensured that the new building and facilities were state of the art and conducive to learning in the 21st century. 	

	Overall
Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school was managed efficiently. Procedures and routines were well established and known by all. The long-serving and loyal caretaker was committed and dedicated to the school and made a significant contribution to the day-to-day organisation. Additional specialist staff and support assistants had been recruited. Both buildings, including the new one, were very well resourced with modern technology, two well-stocked libraries, space for free-flow and independent learning, a swimming pool, a state-of-the-art auditorium and sports hall and well-maintained outdoor play areas for sport and for the Foundation Stage. There was ample space for the planned increase in student numbers in the near future. 	

What are the views of the Principal, parents, and teachers?

Before the inspection, the views of the Acting Principal, parents, and teachers were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form inspection 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	149	28%
	Last year	114	24%
 Teachers	30		68%

- This year, a minority of parents and the majority of teachers responded to the surveys.
- Parents were mainly happy with provision and outcomes in general.
- Homework continued to be a concern - some welcomed the policy, others wanted to see more homework.
- A significant number appeared not to be aware of children's progress in Islamic Education and in their understanding of Islamic values.
- Most were generally happy with safety although there were a few concerns about safety on the bus.
- There were concerns about congestion outside of school especially with the increase in the number of students on roll.
- A significant minority wanted more opportunity for parent-teacher discussions and more frequent written reports on progress.
- Six parents responded on the provision for special educational needs; most were satisfied with the identification, support and progress of their children.
- Teachers were positive in general about the school's performance. A few said their views were valued. A few felt they were not involved in curriculum review, and had not had opportunities to discuss the inspection report and the international assessments of students' attainment.
- A significant minority did not think they had sufficient time for preparation and marking.

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

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the inspection report. This 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 school inspection will report on changes 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