

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Dubai National School ( Branch)

Report published in April 2014

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai National School ( Branch)

Location	Al Twar
Type of school	Private
Website	www.Dnschool.net
Telephone	04-2988555
Address	P.O.BOX: 20057
Principal	AMJAD JUBR, أمجد جبر
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18/KG1- Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2109
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	1591
Date of the inspection	27th to 30th January

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## The context of the school

Dubai National School Al Twar Branch is a private school providing education for boys and girls aged three to 18 years. Students were grouped in 96 classes from the Kindergarten to High School phase. At the time of the inspection the school roll was 2109 students; 312 new students had been registered in the current school year. Almost all students were of Arab nationality and approximately 75 per cent were Emiratis.

The school offered a curriculum which was broadly based on a US framework, for example in English, mathematics and science. Some other subjects followed the UAE Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum guidelines. Students sat a range of international tests to benchmark their attainment against the curriculum and international standards. The school had achieved accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges in 2012. Approximately 3 per cent of the students had been formally identified by the school as having some form of special educational need.

There were 238 suitably qualified teachers. They were supported by a team of 36 teaching assistants, mainly in the younger students' classrooms. Over a quarter of the teaching staff had joined the school in the current academic year and approximately one hundred had joined the school since the last DSIB inspection. The principal was in his fourteenth year at the school.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

### Key strengths

- Attainment and progress in Islamic Education;
- The quality of relationships between all students and staff;
- Personal and social development throughout the school;
- Teaching, learning, assessment and quality of support in Kindergarten.

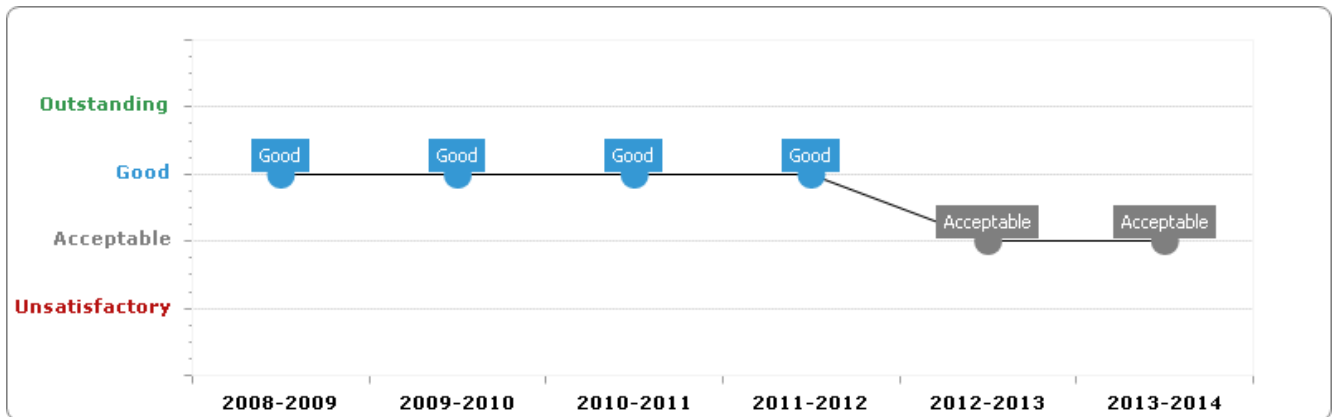
### Recommendations

- Improve progress in key subjects throughout the school;
- Following effective identification, improve the coordination of support for students with special educational needs throughout the school;
- Develop the consistency and accuracy of monitoring classroom practice and use the information to improve teaching and learning;
- Ensure that school action plans are linked to improvements in students' learning. Include clear timelines, measurable success criteria and hold those responsible to account.

## Progress since the last inspection

- Kindergarten attainment and progress in English had improved;
- The standards of personal and social development had improved in the Elementary, Middle and High school phases;
- Although still an issue at the school, there had had been some progress in improving the punctuality of students through the combined efforts of the academic and administrative staff working with students and their parents;
- A considerable amount of assessment information was available to staff but the school was not making the best use of it.

## Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in the key subjects was mixed. In Islamic Education, the majority students demonstrated level of knowledge, skills, and understanding that were above expected levels and could discuss their learning confidently. They applied recitation rules correctly. In Arabic as a first language, younger students interacted well using standard Arabic, whereas senior students were not fluent and confident enough, and often reverted to colloquial Arabic. Comprehension skills were less developed across all phases, particularly students' abilities to interpret, infer, criticise and synthesise. Writing skills were the weakest. In Arabic as an additional language, students' listening skills were the strongest. Students could speak accurate standard Arabic about both familiar and unfamiliar topics. In reading, students were good at decoding Arabic sounds accurately and reading at a good speed. Students could write short paragraphs. However, they made frequent spelling and structural mistakes, particularly when they wrote extendedly. Attainment in English was good in Kindergarten and in the high school and acceptable in elementary and middle school. At all levels, listening and speaking skills were well developed. Students in the high school produced high quality written work. Kindergarten children were developing early numeracy, counting objects and adding simple numbers. Elementary and middle school students were learning practical applications and cross-curricular connections, while high school students were secure in their knowledge of algebraic functions in preparation for calculus. An increasing number of kindergarten children were developing and using scientific skills such as close observation, predictions and enquiry. Elementary students were able to demonstrate their knowledge of science, of investigations and of observations in practical work. Middle and high school students applied their mathematical skills well in science.

Good progress was a feature of Islamic Education. Independent work followed by discussions helped students make good progress in high grades. Progress was limited when teaching strategies used did not allow students to take an active part in their learning or to relate it to other learning and real life situations. In Arabic as a first language, students made better progress in listening, grammar and reading. However, their skills of speaking and writing were slower to develop due to lack of opportunities to improve them. In Arabic as an additional language, students made good progress in all aspects but they made better progress in listening, speaking, and reading than in writing. Progress in English was good in Kindergarten and in the high school and acceptable in elementary and middle schools. Students used language with increasing confidence and fluency as they progressed through the school. Students' writing skills improved sequentially. Progress in mathematics was good in Kindergarten, with children actively involved in using numbers in various ways. Progress in other phases was steady but lacked a fuller development of the analytical and mathematical thinking skills necessary for higher levels of success. In science, children in the Kindergarten made good progress in expressing their understanding, and the application to their own experiences. Students in elementary classes made better progress when applying their understanding to real-world

experiences, usually through hands-on activities. Progress in development of practical and investigative skills in the middle and high schools was hampered by a low level of challenge.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

Learning was good in Kindergarten and acceptable in all other phases. Most students had positive attitudes to and showed enthusiasm for learning. When given the opportunity students participated well, collaborated effectively and confidently presented and explained their work. However, the range of strategies for collaborative work was limited in the majority of lessons. In Kindergarten, activities related to what children knew and understood and this supported their learning. Opportunities for independent learning were frequent in Kindergarten and then diminished in other phases, particularly in boys' lessons. Computer lessons effectively promoted cross-curricular learning and research but, in the majority of lessons, real world examples and cross-curricular links were 'add-ons' and not developed as a natural part of the lessons. In a few lessons there were good opportunities for students to use critical thinking or analytical skills to deepen their understanding.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school had worked hard at improving students' attitudes and behaviour. The measures taken to promote self-discipline amongst students had raised standards. The school's promotion of measures, based strongly on the principles of Islamic teaching, moral values and expected conduct, was very effective in changing attitudes and behaviour. Students were very aware and knowledgeable about what they needed to do to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and regularly participated in activities to promote healthy living. They enjoyed coming to school and this was reflected in their good attendance. Students' understanding of Islamic values and their awareness of local, cultural and global awareness was good. Students had a strong and secure understanding of the influence of Islam, its principles, teachings and values to which students adhered positively. They appreciated and celebrated the local heritage and culture of the UAE through a range of activities and trips. Students' knowledge and understanding of other cultures was enhanced, for example, through a celebration of the foods, customs and lifestyles of the countries from which some students originated. Students understood their responsibilities as members of the school community and took on key roles. They readily took initiative and some were resourceful, creative and successful in devising and developing their own projects, for example in raising global awareness or social justice. Most students across

the school had a positive work ethic. Their environmental awareness was fostered through a range of activities that were incorporated into their daily school lives.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was good in Kindergarten and acceptable across all other phases. Most teachers had good subject knowledge and the majority used well established routines and effective strategies to manage behaviour. A minority did not modify generic lesson plans to meet the learning needs of students in their classes. In all phases there was a minority of stronger lessons where teachers had high expectations, good classroom control and pace. They effectively planned a range of, often imaginative, learning activities. In a majority of lessons teaching was over directed with insufficient opportunities for students' participation or independent work. Most teachers planned opportunities for critical thinking but little time was allowed and students were rarely challenged to deepen understanding. A minority of teachers failed to model good English skills. For example, they mispronounced terms and, in written work both on the board and in worksheets, there was incorrect spelling and poor use of English.

In most kindergarten lessons detailed assessment and recording with feedback to children led to good progress. A common format for assessments across the school enabled effective use of software to record and track attainment of students. Data was analysed to identify strengths and weaknesses of students, to plan modifications to the curriculum and to report detailed outcomes to parents. Most students were entered for international tests. However, school assessments were not aligned with international standards and the results were over-generous. A majority of teachers did not use their knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses to plan lessons to meet the needs of all. They taught to the class average with insufficient challenge or support for others, despite the use of worksheets at three levels. A minority used effective questioning, targeting students to probe and deepen understanding, but others asked closed questions, gave too little time for reflection and accepted answers that were shouted out. Reports to parents and teachers marking did not give suggestions for improvement. Students had few opportunities to use self- or peer-assessment.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good in all phases. The curriculum had a clear rationale and was broad and balanced. It reflected effective planning for progression across levels and preparation for university studies. The curriculum was reviewed at three points each year to ensure good provision of most subjects and to

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identify areas for further development. Cross-curricular links were formalised and, in good or better lessons, led to enhanced learning. The curriculum in the 'Easy Learning' section provided academic support for students with special educational needs. It was not available to students beyond Grade 6. The curriculum provided some opportunities for independent learning and research, such as a study of global warming issues. Enrichment provision included a range of extra-curricular activities and community links which contributed to students' learning.

The school made some adjustments to the design of the curriculum to meet the different needs of students, including those with special educational needs, and this had resulted in acceptable levels of success. Kindergarten and elementary students with special education needs were provided with specialised support, whereas provision across the whole school for meeting different needs of students was inconsistent. Students had some options to study topics that fulfilled their interests and talents. For example, a group of students studied ways to prevent global warming and shared their findings in formal presentations. Twelfth grade students could elect to substitute a course in economics for a chemistry class but this was the only course choice available to students.

[View judgements](#)

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

The arrangements for ensuring the students' health and safety were good in all phases. All areas of the school were well monitored and good supervision procedures ensured the safety of all students on the school premises at all times. School transport was efficiently run. The school building was well maintained. Toilets and washing facilities clean and hygienic and the health clinics were run efficiently. The recently appointed nutritionist had ensured that balanced healthy food options were available in the canteens. A number of projects promoting healthy living had been carried out. A child protection policy was in place and members of staff were aware of its provision and of their responsibilities.

The quality of support was good in Kindergarten and the elementary phase, and acceptable in the other phases. Staff-student relationships were positive and a sense of mutual respect existed within the classrooms. The school had an effective approach to managing the behaviour of its students. Monitoring of students' well-being and personal development was managed with commitment by the counsellors and the learning support staff. The improved systems to monitoring students' attendance and punctuality had increased the level of attendance. Students' punctuality, whilst improving, was a priority for monitoring and action. Teachers provided adequate information to students on their progress and listened to students'

questions and concerns. Advice and guidance was provided to students when necessary but students, especially girls preparing to select universities, did not visit a wide enough range to inform their choices.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of leadership and management was acceptable. The principal was committed and well-meaning. Leaders and managers at all levels had engaged in a number of improvement initiatives, for example the new lesson observation framework. Overall, the leadership team showed an understanding of the general needs of the school and was slowly becoming empowered to make the changes that were needed. However, the fragmented leadership structure and lack of highly focused lines of accountability restricted the overall pace of improvement. Nevertheless, by combining the strengths of the whole leadership team, the school had acceptable capacity to improve overall student progress. The leadership had taken steps to address a majority of the recommendations in the previous report and this had resulted in improved standards of behaviour and responsibility among students.

The school's systems for self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school action plans provided a sound basis for further developments but performance management procedures and policies were not yet fully and consistently embedded, and lacked a clear enough focus on the outcomes of students. Increasingly, a broader range of stakeholders were presented with opportunities to become involved in the processes. For example, the school sought parents' and students' views on a range of issues. Internal lesson observations were made as part of teachers' performance management but there was a lack of rigour in linking provision to students' learning outcomes.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Through a number of links, including technology, parents were made aware of their students' progress and needs, and responded. Parent-teacher meetings took place regularly. Parents were kept informed and assisted in developing links between the school and community.

Governance was acceptable. The strategic and advisory role of governance, including holding the professional leadership of the school to account for its performance, was under-developed. The Board members had a strong commitment to the school. Although their monitoring of the school's development was adequate it did not focus enough on students' outcomes.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was good. Student movements throughout the school were orderly. Efforts to improve punctuality were beginning to have effect. The school learning

environment was enhanced by the addition of a number of classrooms and ancillary rooms, and stimulating displays of students' work. An appropriate range of learning resources was available.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students with special educational needs (SEN) made similar progress towards their personal targets as that of their peers. The SEN co-ordinator was well qualified and, together with a team of teachers, enthusiastically led the department. The school was fully inclusive and there were clear procedures for admitting students with SEN. The school had a good understanding of the range of special needs categories and had identified students in most of them. The Easy Learning section included students from Grades 1 to 6. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) were in place as appropriate but work was not always differentiated sufficiently to meet different needs.

In mainstream lessons in elementary, middle and high school phases, teachers used a range of assessments to check students' understanding but the information was not used consistently to plan differentiated learning activities. In Kindergarten, most of the lessons included opportunities for practical activities that provided for a range of learning styles. Parents were involved in monthly meetings to discuss targets and set new objectives and the school provided regular reports and updates on the progress and attainment of all SEN students. Changes were made to the curriculum to include more opportunities for practical learning. Timetabling was adjusted to allow opportunities for one to one, small groups, in-class withdrawal and specialist support. In middle and high phases not all teachers were fully aware of the requirements of students with SEN in their subject areas. In Kindergarten and the Easy Learning section, starting points were clear and, as a result of detailed assessments, students' progress was effectively tracked.

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

Almost all teachers had secure subject knowledge. However their understanding of how students learn well was just developing, particularly in the middle and high schools. Apart from the good practices observed in the elementary classes, most lessons were over-directed by teachers leaving little room for students to engage actively in their learning. All lessons were planned. Nevertheless, most activities were pitched towards the average learner with limited consideration to other groups of students such as low achievers and students with special educational needs. Teachers in the elementary phase used various resources,



including ICT to support students' learning. In the middle and high school, most resources used were restricted to projected textbook pages and some uninteresting and low-challenging worksheets. Teachers interacted well with their students, although that mainly took the form of whole class discussions involving mostly the high achieving students. The quality of questioning skills of most teachers was good but teachers were not successful enough at providing equitable opportunities for all students to think and answer. Except for most lessons in the elementary classes, the teachers' strict control of students' learning led to excessive teacher talk and lack of engagement of students in meaningful learning experiences. There were limited opportunities for students to become independent learners and to develop their enquiry and critical thinking skills.

The Arabic curriculum was mainly focused on covering content rather than developing students' understanding and skills. There was not enough modification of curriculum to cater to the different needs of students. Most teachers relied heavily on the MoE text books rather than using additional effective learning resources. There were some noted enrichment activities, such as language competitions but these engaged only a minority of students.



## 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	53	5%
	Last year	149	15%
Teachers	152		69%
Students	305		86%

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

Only a twentieth of the parents responded to their questionnaire. The majority of teachers and most students responded. Overall, parents who responded were largely supportive of the school and the quality of teaching. The parents were generally satisfied with their children's progress in Islamic Education and Arabic but had concerns about progress in English, science and mathematics. Over half of the parents in the survey felt that the voices of parents were heard but a few parents were concerned that school leaders did not respond to their views. Most parents felt their children enjoyed school and were safe. Students and parents agreed that children were treated fairly at school and that the school dealt well with incidents of bullying. A majority of students considered that teaching and learning in the school were good. Most teachers and parents thought that the school was well led. Almost all parents stated that the school reports were regular and helpful.

## What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau**

**Knowledge and Human Development Authority**

## How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:  
[inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

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