

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Al Diyafah High School

Report published in April 2014

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Diyafah High School

Location	Al Nahda
Type of school	Private
Website	www.diyafah.com
Telephone	04 267 1115
Address	P O Box 24023, Dubai
Principal	Fatima Martin
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Foundation Stage-Year 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1500
Largest nationality group of students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	Less than 1%
Date of the inspection	20th to 23rd January 2014

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## The context of the school

The school is located in Al Nadha and has been open for 33 years. Most of the students were Indian nationals and about a tenth were Pakistanis. There were over 25 other nations represented in the student body. Most students spoke English as an additional language and almost all learned Arabic as a third or fourth language.

The school offered a modified curriculum based on the National Curriculum for England and had recently introduced the revised Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Students in Years 10 and 11 took examinations in the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and those in the 6th form (Years 12 and 13) studied for A (Advanced) level and AS (Advanced Subsidiary) examinations. Around 25 students had special educational needs.

There were 120 teaching staff and 20 teaching assistants. At the time of the inspection, a new principal had been in post for two months.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

### Key strengths

- Students' good progress in English, mathematics and science and their above average attainment in these subjects;
- Students' strong sense of personal responsibility, their understanding of Islamic values, their global awareness and their willingness to support the local and wider communities;
- The way the curriculum was designed to meet the needs of all groups of students;
- The outstanding attention to health and safety, and the excellent support and guidance for students, including careers advice;
- The vision and drive of school leaders to ensure all students did as well as they could within a calm, warm and purposeful atmosphere.

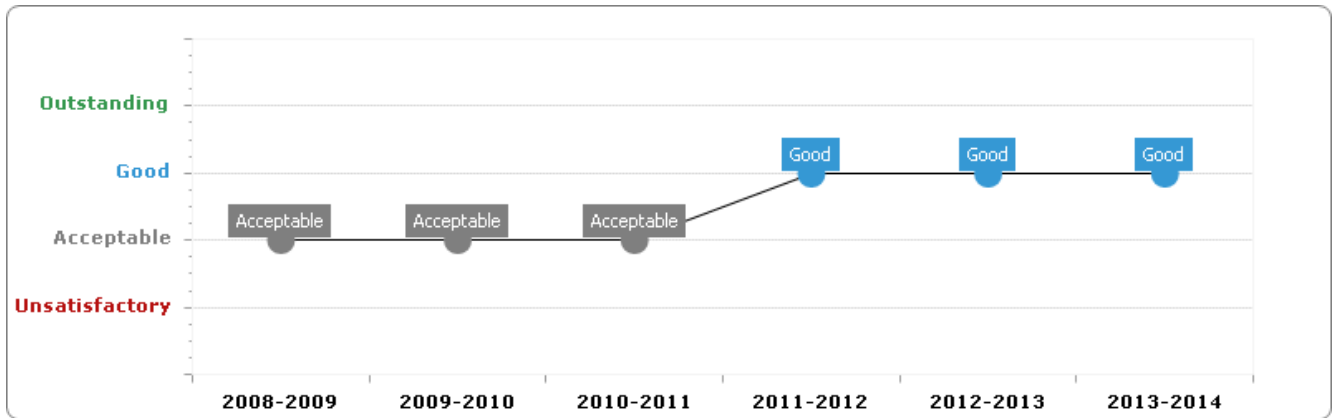
### Recommendations

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in the primary section and in Arabic and Islamic Education by:
  - sharing successful methods across phases and subjects;
  - extending teachers' skills in using questions to deepen students' thinking;
  - encouraging teachers to use a variety of lessons structures in order to sustain students' interest and engagement;
  - extending the variety of group work so that there are more opportunities for students to further develop their learning skills;
  - providing teachers with training in modulating their use of voice so that a calm ambience is maintained in lessons.
- Extend the facilities to increase opportunities for practical work in primary science and to allow further subject choices for older students.
- Ensure the time allocated to the teaching of Arabic fully meets the Ministry of Education requirements.

## Progress since the last inspection

- Very good headway had been made in improving the curriculum and the quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage and children were making more rapid progress and reaching higher levels of attainment.
- Assessment systems had been refined and the use of assessment information to plan day-to-day lessons had improved.
- The curriculum for Arabic as a first language had been extended to include all aspects of language development.
- The quality of teaching had improved in the secondary phase. However, there were still inconsistencies in the primary phase.
- High staff turnover in Islamic Education had meant that progress and standards remained inconsistent.

## Trend of overall performance



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
<b>Islamic Education</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Not Applicable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>English</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Mathematics</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Science</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good

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	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)



## How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[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	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic was acceptable overall although it was good in primary Islamic Education. Attainment was good in English, mathematics and science, with two exceptions. At post-16, attainment was acceptable in English but outstanding in mathematics. In Islamic Education, primary students understood the important role of the Prophet Mohammed and the impact of his message on their lives. They demonstrated a secure understanding of the Pillars of Islam, the manners expected of a good Muslim and key Islamic concepts and principles. Most students of Arabic as a first language used simple standard Arabic to express simple ideas, although with some errors. They read texts aloud with clarity and fluency, and with reasonable comprehension. Writing skills were adequate, although few students were confident enough to write at length. Students of Arabic as an additional language generally responded correctly to teachers' greetings and instructions, and understood familiar expressions. Primary students responded to familiar questions using simple words. Secondary students could form simple sentences but lacked confidence and accuracy when taking part in conversations. In English, lower primary students were able to listen and read confidently. Older students used descriptive and atmospheric vocabulary. They are like small drops of heaven.' By Year 11, students had acquired excellent debating skills. In mathematics, primary could confidently tackle problems including fractions, percentages and decimals by Year 6. By Year 9, students had strong algebraic skills. The interpretation of graphs was a strong feature in Years 11 to 13. In science, students acquired knowledge through hands-on activities but they were not wholly confident in using scientific methods and making predictions.

Progress was acceptable in Islamic Education and Arabic, except for secondary Arabic as a first language where it was good. Progress was good in English, mathematics and science. Students' understanding of Islamic practices was progressing soundly but there were inconsistencies in how quickly they gained skills in using Qur'an and Hadeeth sources to support their discussions. Older students were building well their understanding of their roles in the Muslim community. Across the school, students were making slow progress in improving their recitation skills. In Arabic as a first language, most students made steady progress in their speaking. Progress in reading comprehension and extended writing was slower. In Arabic as an additional language, students had competent skills of decoding and pronouncing Arabic. In English, handwriting skills developed well. Students became very articulate and grew in confidence in discussion and presentations. Good grammar meant that students increasingly used the correct sentence structure and language rules. In mathematics, students were developing a very secure understanding of mathematical principles and increasingly confident in applying them to solving complex problems. In science, students

made good progress when investigations were linked to theoretical understanding. This was especially true of secondary and post-16 students.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of learning was good in all phases. Most students were eager learners who were confident in presenting their work, relished opportunities for independent work and had good interpersonal and learning skills. In the Foundation Stage, for example, children enthusiastically explored the concepts of heavy and light using simple equipment. Students generally worked well collaboratively and showed high levels of respect for each other and for teachers. They were confident to ask questions to clarify their understanding. In a majority of subjects, students had opportunities to research and work independently and in groups; this was less developed in Arabic lessons. The range of strategies for collaborative group work was limited in many lessons. Students used information and communication technology (ICT) more effectively for extra-curricular work than in lessons; opportunities for them to use critical thinking to deepen understanding were limited. Students were mostly able to make clear connections with prior learning or everyday life.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students' personal responsibility was good in the Foundation Stage and primary phase, and outstanding in the older phases. Students across the school had a good attitudes and shared positive relationships with one another and with staff. In the Foundation Stage and primary phase, students were considerate of each other and responded well to adults. Older students demonstrated excellent behaviour and were keen on guiding younger students by example. Most students followed school guidance in healthy living. Almost all students were punctual; overall attendance was good.

Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness was good in the Foundation Stage, primary and secondary phases; it was outstanding in post-16. Most students had a good understanding of the impact of Islamic values on Dubai. Across the school, students appreciated Emirati culture, and celebrated the similarities between their cultures and culture in the UAE. Older students reflected on the impact of Islam on making Dubai a safe city for all. They had good awareness of UAE heritage, customs and traditions.

Students' community and environmental responsibility was good in the Foundation Stage and primary phase, and outstanding in the older phases. Students contributed willingly and actively to the life of the school. For example, senior students ran some of the after-school activities. There was good communication and co-operation between students in different years. Students had an excellent work ethic. They cared for the school environment and took initiatives in supporting conservation, especially the senior students. The school participated enthusiastically in many projects such as the Dubai Energy and Water Agency (DEWA) eco-monitor competitions and the Emirates Environmental Group (EEG) initiatives. Their care and help extended to other countries such as India and Sri Lanka.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was good in all phases. Most teachers had a good understanding of their subject and of how students learn. Nearly all made clear to students what they were intended to learn during lessons and used relevant real-life examples. In the Foundation Stage, purposeful activities enabled productive learning through play. Stronger lessons were characterised by effective planning, good behaviour management, an appropriate pace, a range of imaginative learning activities and high expectations. Not all teachers used challenging questions to deepen understanding rather than widen knowledge; in a few lessons, students became restless and their attention wandered because the teaching was over-directive. Such lessons were more common in the primary phase and in Arabic. A majority of teachers planned lessons to ensure students had opportunities for active participation but opportunities for students to initiate, plan and carry through complete investigations were infrequent.

Assessment was good in all phases. International tests and examination results were used effectively to compare students' attainment with those in similar schools. In the Foundation Stage, children's development was recorded regularly in individual, cumulative learning profiles. These were used well in day-to-day planning. Teachers mostly used the analysis of assessment data well to plan lessons that met the needs of all students, including the less able and most able. In a majority of lesson, teachers used open ended questioning, although they did not react enough to the students' responses. In a few lessons, including those in Arabic and Islamic Education, closed questioning and questions directed at the whole class were insufficiently challenging. In a majority of lessons students' review of their work and that of others enhanced learning. Most teachers marked work and tests regularly and informed students of their level of attainment. Assessment data were used well to set targets and report to parents.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum quality was good across the school and outstanding in Post 16. The curriculum effectively reflected the schools' values with its specific focus upon the support, challenge and care for the individual child. The school had creatively adapted the requirements of its stated curriculum with a range of options which met students' personal interests. The unique option structure broadened the curriculum experience of students and enthused them. An aptitude test eased the transition of Year 9 students into the formal structure of the IGCSE. The curriculum was regularly reviewed to enhance its effectiveness. Recent modifications in Foundation Stage to reflect changes in the UK were having a positive impact upon children's learning. The community outreach programme provided outstanding experiences for students with its international perspective. This strong commitment to community links related to environmental projects provided a meaningful context for cross-curricular links in science, commerce, geography and environmental management. These extra dimensions to the curriculum provided a stimulating and enriching learning experience for all students.

The curriculum design was good in foundation and outstanding in all other phases. It was innovative and creatively planned to meet the varying needs of all groups of students. It was designed and adapted to promote the full engagement of students. Those students who had been identified as gifted followed an accelerated programme which challenged them and developed effectively their respective capabilities. Students were encouraged to become independent learners through access to variety of online courses which complemented an extensive and flexible option programme. This flexibility was also embedded in the expansive programme to support those students with special educational needs, which promoted their academic achievement, confidence and self-esteem.

[View judgements](#)

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

Provision for health and safety was outstanding. Students were always supervised on campus and on buses, and their safety was a top priority for staff. Buildings, equipment and resources were maintained in very good condition through scheduled checks and met the educational needs of all students. The school's doctor and nurses provided students with excellent health services. For example, they promoted healthy living by providing some students with individualised fitness plans, kept an eye on the content of students' lunch boxes and encouraged healthy eating in the canteen. They maintained updated health-related records on

all students and stored medicines securely. The child protection policy was clear, detailed and well-known to all students and staff.

The outstanding quality of support offered to students was a significant strength of the school. Relationships across the school were warm and reassuring. There were very clear processes that ensured that students' attendance and punctuality were good. Clear and informed procedures identified students with special educational needs quickly. Staff were determined to do the best for their students and they catered for the wide range of needs exceptionally well with modifications to the curriculum. Students were fully involved in setting their own targets and these were reviewed with parents on a regular basis. The aptitudes of gifted and talented students were nurtured very effectively. Older students were offered high quality advice from a wide range of sources for their further education or career development.

[View judgements](#)

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

The leadership of the school was good. The school's continuing success owed much to the clear sense of purpose and consistent drive to sustain and build on the school's strengths. The newly appointed principal provided wise counsel and clear direction for colleagues, and had already established excellent relationships with leaders, staff, parents and pupils. A strong sense of purpose and collective vision permeated the school, not least because of the strong drive of the highly effective leadership team. The school's progress on several fronts since the previous inspection indicated a good capacity for further improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Well-established systems for gathering information were used effectively to gain a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. A close eye was kept on performance data so that any anomalies were spotted quickly. Lesson observations, including those by senior leaders and department heads, provided a useful overview of the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers were also involved in evaluating their colleagues' work in the classroom. These strategies were used to identify and share approaches that worked well and address any weaknesses that emerged through an extensive range of training. The results of self-review were used well to inform development planning. Action plans were succinct but appropriately detailed. Although these plans were clear about what needed to be done and by whom, some lacked quantifiable targets, which somewhat limited the ability of leaders to evaluate the impact of the initiatives on students' academic progress and personal development.

The partnership with parents and the community was outstanding. Every effort was made to ensure parents were well informed about their children's progress. In addition to regular comprehensive written reports on students' progress towards curriculum expectations and their own individual targets, teachers routinely communicated with parents through the school's learning platform, emails, phone calls and quick response tags. A parents' council provided a useful conduit between school leaders and the parent body. Parents' views were canvassed regularly through surveys. These were conducted annually and occasionally should parents raise issues during the year. The school drew effectively on parents' experience and expertise to support learning. Mutually beneficial links with the community were evident, for example, in the willingness of local businesses to host students on work experience and in the contribution made by students through the extensive outreach programme.

Governance was good. The owner had an intimate knowledge of the school. She was based in the school and kept in close contact with senior leaders. She understood her role in setting strategic direction, promoting the school's core values and vision, without becoming involved in the day-to-day running of the school. She attended parent council meetings and parents reported that they were consulted about action plans and that their views are taken seriously. Plans were in hand to create an advisory group with the intention of widening the involvement of stakeholders. Performance management systems were fully established and highly effective.

The school was extremely well managed, ensuring everything ran smoothly. Staff were recruited with great care to ensure they had the qualifications and experience appropriate to their responsibilities. Training opportunities were many and varied, and rightly focused on sustaining and improving on the good quality of teaching. The premises were of good quality and very well maintained. There was a good range of learning resources, although the number and variety of library books was sufficient but not extensive. Plans had been approved to extend the building to facilitate a wider range of subjects choices at GCSE and A level.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students with special educational needs were supported exceptionally well. The school was determined to provide the best for their students. The team leaders used the extensive knowledge to good effect and were well supported by the 'special educator' and the learning support teacher. Students' needs were quickly identified by various methods on entry; older students could seek support independently. The curriculum



was adapted when necessary to suit the needs of the students including the gifted and talented students. Termly tests were also used to create very personalised programmes, which included one-to-one sessions for some students. Support in these sessions was well focused and very successful. Older pupils could reduce the number of subjects they studied and gifted and talented students could increase them. There was a parent support group which was advised by outside professionals who provided useful advice and guidance. They were also involved in evaluating the individual education plans to ensure, for example the language used in the target setting was meaningful to students and parents.

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

There had been improvement in teaching strategies used in Arabic in the secondary phase, with more focus on group work and discussions. Students mostly used standard Arabic in lessons. More opportunities were provided for students to converse at length using standard Arabic. Questions were more challenging, and students explained and discussed and justified their answers which further enhanced their speaking skills. However, in the primary phase, there was a lack of challenge in too many lessons. Teacher used ICT effectively in most lessons to enhance students' learning. Lessons were mostly well planned in the secondary phase but the planning was weaker in the primary phase.

The curriculum was not compliant with the Ministry of Education requirements regarding the time allocated to teaching Arabic as a first language in Year 4 and Year 5. Long and short-term planning including purposeful activities were evident, mostly in the secondary phase, to ensure students covered all skills in Arabic. Curriculum planning ensured meaningful contexts and opportunities for progression in most areas of skills. Opportunities for students to develop deeper reading skills were not always sufficient and there was limited scope for extended and creative free writing.

## 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	498	49%
	Last year	401	51%
Teachers	79		69%
Students	171		98%

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

A large majority of parents responding to the survey were entirely happy about almost all aspects of the school. They were particularly pleased with the progress their children were making in the key subjects of Islamic Education, Arabic, English, mathematics and science. They were overwhelmingly positive about the extent to which their children enjoyed school, and both Muslim and non-Muslim parents felt that their children acquired a good understanding of Islam. Parents had confidence in school leaders, the quality of teaching and the curriculum, and were happy with how children were looked after and kept safe. There were mixed views about homework but no consensus about whether there was too much or too little. Students were also very positive, views although a minority felt that homework had little impact on their learning or progress, and a similar proportion felt there were too few curriculum options or extra activities. Teachers were generally very content and had confidence in the school leadership, particularly in the support provided for their continuing professional development.

## 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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