

# INSPECTION REPORT

## The School of Research Science

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT The School of Research Science

Location	Al Qusais
Type of school	Private
Website	www.srsdubai.ae
Telephone	04-2988772
Address	PO Box 27463, Al Qusais, Dubai
Principal	Nan Billingham
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Ages and Grades	3-18 / Foundation Stage to post-16
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1,403
Number of Emirati students	852 (61%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 23rd to Thursday 26th January 2012

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## The context of the school

Located in Al Qusais, the School of Research Science opened in 1998. At the time of the inspection, the roll was 1,403 students, aged from three to 18 years. The school followed a curriculum which was based on the English National Curriculum and the UAE Ministry of Education. Students were entered for GCSE and IGCSE examinations at the end of the secondary school in Year 11, and for GCE AS levels at the end of Year 12.

There were 113 teachers, including the Principal and the senior management team. All had appropriate teaching qualifications. They were supported by 33 teaching assistants, and by three technicians. Students were grouped in 49 classes, five at each stage in Foundation Stage and decreasing to two by Year 12. Eight hundred and fifty two students, or approximately 60 per cent of the school population, were Emirati. Thirty six teachers were in their first year at the school.

## Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

## How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The School of Research Science provided a good quality of education, with many outstanding features. These included attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic for first language learners. Attainment and progress were outstanding in mathematics at the secondary and post-16 stages. Students' appreciation of Islamic culture and their civic understanding were outstanding at all phases in the school. Children's experience at Foundation Stage had strengthened, and was well suited to their developmental, emotional and intellectual needs. Teaching and learning were good throughout the school, as was assessment, apart from the Foundation Stage, where it was outstanding.

The school had made good progress in addressing the recommendations of the previous report. Although teaching and learning were good, there were inconsistencies which resulted in an uneven experience for students. In around half the lessons seen, teaching and learning were good and in a fifth of the lessons they were outstanding. However, teaching and learning were judged to be only acceptable in a fifth of the lessons. Thus, a significant minority of students did not experience teaching that was good or better.

Attainment in English, mathematics and science had strengthened by the end of the primary stage. The programme of assessment had been fully reconsidered and effectively reviewed. The school was very well placed to consolidate its present position and to advance.

## Key strengths

- The strong performance in attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language;
- Students' excellent understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture;
- The high quality of children's experience at the Foundation Stage;
- The leadership, direction and vision of the Board of Governors and the Principal;
- The school's arrangements for reviewing its own performance, and the actions taken thereafter.

## Recommendations

- Improve consistency in attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language, English, mathematics and science;
- Improve teaching and learning throughout the school so that all practice matches the best.

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

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

Attainment was outstanding or good in most key subjects apart from the Foundation Stage, where it was acceptable. Most students in Islamic Education understood key principles of worship and faith in Islam. The level of recitation was above age expectations in all stages. In Arabic as a first language most students in primary could speak in whole sentences clearly and accurately and participate in long conversations. In Arabic for second language learners, most students' listening and reading skills were good. Students spoke confidently, although their writing was limited. Attainment in English was acceptable in the Foundation Stage where children entered with limited English language skills. It was good across the other phases. In mathematics, students at all stages demonstrated good computational skills. Gifted and talented students were not always challenged enough even when differentiated worksheets were used. Students in science had good skills of investigation by the end of primary stage. In secondary, they had a good knowledge of nuclear energy, and, in post-16, of cell division.

Progress was outstanding or good throughout the school. In Islamic Education progress was above international expectations. In Arabic as a first language, students steadily developed their language skills throughout the school. Students of Arabic as an additional language were extending their vocabulary, but their writing was not developing or progressing as quickly. In English, in the Foundation and primary stages, students steadily increased speaking and reading skills. The oldest students showed good understanding of a range of literature but their skills in writing were less well developed. In the best classes in mathematics, students progressed at a quick pace. Elsewhere, the ablest students sometimes completed work without adequate challenge. In science, progress was less rapid because students did not have the opportunity to develop their own inquiry skills. Students with special educational needs (SEN) were making good progress in all subjects.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good

Attitudes and behaviour were mostly good throughout the school although a few students were overly boisterous in some classes. Relationships between students and adults were positive. Most students made healthy food choices and had a good awareness of what they needed to do to stay fit. Attendance was acceptable, but punctuality was too variable. The students demonstrated an outstanding appreciation of Islam and its impact on the contemporary society in Dubai and internationally. Most students respected and understood very well local traditions and heritage. They had an excellent understanding of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai, their own culture and other cultures around the world. The students had a good understanding of their responsibilities as members of the school and local community. They knew how Dubai had developed and understood some reasons for the changes in Dubai and the other Emirates. Almost all students kept the school clean and tidy, and took part in activities to improve the local environment.

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

Throughout the school the quality of teaching was mostly good, with some outstanding features and some inconsistencies at all stages. Most teachers had good subject knowledge, high expectations and had a good understanding of how young people learn. In the best lessons, teachers planned lessons to enable structured discussions which encouraged students to take active roles in learning and to think critically. For instance, in a science lesson, taught jointly by a secondary and primary teacher, there was skilful questioning to assess prior learning about particles, and opportunities to develop ideas through student discussion. Generally, however, teachers did not offer enough opportunities for the development of deeper understanding of their subjects. While most teachers clearly stated their learning objectives, a number did not use open questions effectively enough or summarise at the end of the lesson what had been learned. Individual students with specific learning needs were clearly identified and supported by the majority of teaching strategies in most phases of the school. Teaching in other subjects including art, design technology, physical education, business studies and ICT, was generally good, and sometimes outstanding. In these lessons teachers promoted interactive and engaging learning. Lessons focused on developing specific skills and encouraged peer evaluation which was particularly well developed especially in the art classes.

Learning was good across all the stages. Most students in the Foundation and primary stages had regular opportunities to work independently and to solve problems. However, not all of the work was challenging, which restricted students' learning. In a few lessons in primary classes, students were over-reliant on teacher direction and consequently their learning was too passive. Nevertheless, when given the opportunity to do so, for instance in the secondary and post-16 phases, most students responded with enthusiasm to group work and presentations. Generally, most students answered questions with confidence and the majority were eager to be involved and take responsibility for their learning. However,

a number of students were more passive and compliant rather than stimulated by their learning experiences. The extent to which students could make connections to other learning and to relate these to the real world varied between subjects.

Assessment procedures were outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good in the rest of the school. Leaders and managers used a wide range of measures to monitor students' progress and attainment. Heads of department and teachers used the information well to set targets. The majority of students were generally aware of their attainment and clear about what they had to do to improve. In mathematics, teachers used assessment information well to plan suitably challenging work for their students, but in other subjects where this did not happen, students did not always make sufficient progress. Although teachers marked books regularly, they did not always provide detailed written feedback to students.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

The curriculum was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good elsewhere. It had a clear rationale aimed at developing students' inquiry skills; it was also well planned to ensure continuity and progression. Arrangements for a smooth transition between phases were mostly effective. The curriculum was updated by regular reviews which incorporated the views of both students and parents. The Foundation Stage curriculum offered a highly appropriate programme for the youngest students. It emphasised the encouragement of confident language users who could take responsibility for their learning. Students' personal development was well promoted too and their learning was enhanced by links between subjects strengthened by the adoption of the International Primary Curriculum. However, the curriculum for older students lacked choice of subjects, such as history and an additional foreign language. The planned curriculum offered some opportunities for research and critical thinking but these were not consistently applied. Curriculum provision did not meet the needs of all students and as such, there was a significant gap between the school's stated aims and what the curriculum could deliver. Enrichment opportunities ensured that almost all students had access to a wide range of extracurricular activities and out-of-school learning excursions.

## 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	Good	Good

Arrangements for health and safety were outstanding. The youngest children showed a strong sense of security, felt safe and had a good appreciation of safety issues. Almost all students demonstrated a good understanding about the importance of exercise. They had healthy food options. The premises were clean, well maintained and spacious, providing appropriate indoor accommodation and facilities for all students including those with special educational needs. The social counsellor was the named person for child protection. All staff members had been issued with guidelines and trained in the early identification of children who might be at risk. Students reported that they felt safe in the school.

The quality of support was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and Primary, and good at Secondary and Post-16. Aspects of students' well-being and personal development were monitored systematically in the Foundation Stage and primary phase. Teachers and classroom assistants at Foundation Stage were highly skilled and sensitive in their management of children and their behaviour. Elsewhere, relationships between staff and students were good and behaviour was mainly managed well. Guidance about future education and careers was introduced in the primary phase. Older students benefited from internships, career conventions and visits to, and visitors from, universities. Although the school had introduced some innovative systems and appointed additional staff, they were not yet impacting fully on outcomes. Students with special needs were identified very quickly and, with additional levels of support within class, they made good progress. Provision for the gifted and talented was also good. Systems for promoting good attendance and punctuality were not fully effective.

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

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Outstanding
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Outstanding
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Outstanding
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

Leadership of the school was outstanding. The Principal had a very clear vision for the future of the school, which she communicated extremely effectively to students, parents and staff. She was ably assisted by a dedicated senior leadership team whose commitment to improvement supported on-going developments. Year co-ordinators and heads of department had helped to motivate purposeful teams at all levels. At Foundation Stage, and in mathematics, leaders had been very effective in bringing about change and improvement in many aspects. The school had a good capability for sustained improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were outstanding. An effective programme of systematic and thorough analysis ensured that all staff were aware of the school's strengths and development needs. All promoted staff along with the Board of Governors were regularly involved in thorough monitoring activities. Students' and parents' involvement ensured that the information gathered was fully representative of all stakeholders. The school's improvement plan was driven by a desire to increase performance. Strategies for implementation were carefully considered and the action plan sensibly limited and attainable.

Partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding. Parents were generally content with the school, although a few were unclear about future plans. They indicated that the Principal and her staff were very approachable, helpful and supportive. Any issues relating to attainment or behaviour were dealt with expeditiously. Communication was of very high quality. The school portal allowed immediate access to details of students' progress. Parents knew what their children needed to do in order to improve. Consultation evenings were well attended and beneficial to all parties. Strong and developing links with other schools and the community gave very good opportunities for wider student involvement.

Governance was outstanding. The Board was fully involved in the life and work of the school and ensured that their overarching vision for its development was addressed. Members informed themselves about attainment and progress, teaching and learning by visiting classes over six days per year. The Board

expected, and received, full accountability from senior leaders. Its members included representatives from parents and the community, whose work was supported by parallel committees of parents, students and staff.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. The daily operation of the school was extremely efficient. The timetable was skilfully constructed to support and deliver the curriculum. All teaching staff were well qualified. They were effectively deployed, with a particularly innovative use of extra English and Arabic speaking staff in the Foundation Stage. The premises were of very high quality although outside sports facilities were limited. However, appropriate, safe play areas for younger children assisted their physical development. Resources were extensive and the school's state of the art Information and Communications Technology (ICT) systems provided an excellent platform for imaginative developments in learning.

## 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	206	29%
	Last year	208	24%
Teachers	96		77%
Students	122		66%

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

A minority of parents responded to the survey. They were generally positive. However, more than a fifth of those who responded had negative views on the suitability of the homework tasks which were offered. Almost all indicated that their children were happy at school, and felt secure and well protected. Most teachers responded to their survey. Their views were overwhelmingly positive. They spoke very highly of the quality of leadership and of the support which they received. About two-thirds of the senior students responded to their survey. A minority reported that behaviour could be bad but left unchecked by the school. They thought that they did not have enough opportunities to develop their appreciation of different cultures in Dubai. They were concerned about a lack of subject choice in the secondary and post-16 phases, and felt that they did not have enough opportunities to develop responsibility or to learn in the wider community.

## 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)

## Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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