

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Dubai International Academy

Report published in April, 2014

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai International Academy

Location	Emirates Hills
Type of school	Private
Website	www.diadubai.com
Telephone	04-3684111
Address	PO.BOX 118111 Emirates Hills ,Dubai
Principal	Julian Wilcock
Curriculum	IB
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1946
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	19
Date of the inspection	3rd to 6th February 2014

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## The context of the school

Dubai International Academy is situated in Emirates Hills. At the time of the inspection there were 1946 students attending the school. They were aged from three to 18 years. The school taught the International Baccalaureate (IB). From Kindergarten until Year 6 the school offered the Primary Years Programme (PYP), from Year 7 to Year 11 the Middle Years Programme (MYP), and in Years 12 and 13 the Diploma Programme (DP). At that stage students followed Higher Level or Standard Level courses, as well as the Diploma Studies course. The student population was truly international, with 78 nationalities being represented. Nineteen Emirati students were on the school roll. The school's management structure had been reviewed. Heads of Department and subject leaders had been given more responsibility for learning and teaching and for the raising of attainment. There were 166 teachers, including teachers for students with special educational needs (SEN) and for English as a second language (ESL). In addition, specialists supported home languages such as Dutch and other European languages. There were 23 teaching assistants. The school had received accreditation visits from outside agencies, including the Council of International Schools.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

### Key strengths

- Improvement in attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science.
- Improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in KG and DP.
- Students' personal and social development and its impact on their learning.
- The outstanding provision for students' social and personal needs.
- The school's creation of a cohesive community from the diverse range of cultures and backgrounds.
- The ability of school leaders, governors, parents and teachers to work towards a common pursuit of excellence.

### Recommendations

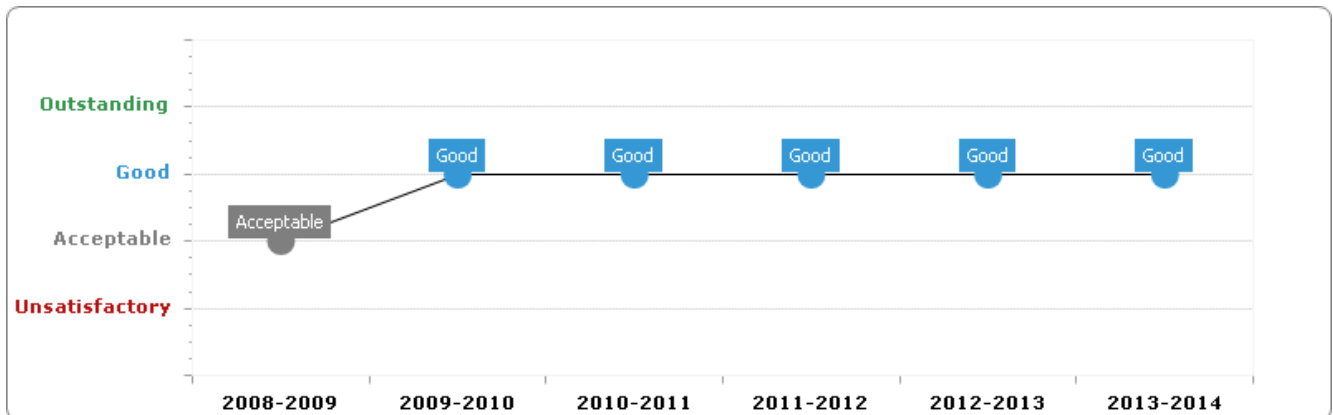
- Raise attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic by sharing the exemplary practices from other subject areas and by raising expectations in lessons.
- Further improve teaching, learning and progress in PYP and MYP.
- Improve the early identification of, provision for and monitoring of special learning needs on entry to KG.

## Progress since the last inspection

The school had addressed all recommendations made in the previous report.

- Teachers had provided more opportunities for the initiation of personal investigations and had successfully developed students' higher order thinking skills in most subjects.
- Assessment practices had been improved in KG and in DP stages.
- Leaders were addressing the improvement priorities, though not always with the same consistency.
- Approaches to self-evaluation had been strengthened, but this had not yet led to a fully informative evaluation document.
- Although the school had taken steps to try to improve Arabic, there were few signs of improvement.

## Trend of overall performance



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

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
<b>Islamic Education</b>				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>English</b>				
Attainment	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Mathematics</b>				
Attainment	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good
<b>Science</b>				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Quality of students' learning skills	Outstanding	Good	Good	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Good	Good	Outstanding
Assessment	Outstanding	Good	Good	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)



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

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Islamic education was acceptable in PYP and good elsewhere. Most students could recite the short chapters they learnt from the Holy Qur'an. Most, especially in MYP and DP, showed knowledge and understanding of Seerah. In PYP, most could explain the five pillars of Islam. In MYP and DP, the majority had a good understanding of key Islamic concepts, manners, morals and values. In Arabic as first language, listening was the strongest skill. Most students spoke confidently but used dialect extensively. They lacked accuracy when reading unfamiliar texts. The quality of writing was weak in all phases. In Arabic as an additional language, most students could listen and respond to familiar greetings. They engaged successfully in simple conversations about family and daily life. Reading was challenging for the majority, and writing skills were limited. In English, attainment was good in KG and PYP and outstanding elsewhere. Almost all students developed and applied higher order literacy, research and analytical skills in English across the curriculum. In mathematics in KG, children understood the concept of number and shape. At other stages most PYP students could select and explain a range of mathematical methods, and attainment was good. Higher achieving students took a leading role in mathematics related inquiry. Children in KG, in science, could clearly describe garden creatures. Year 5 students researched habitats using information and communication technology (ICT). Year 11 students made sophisticated models of DNA. Students in DP showed outstanding attainment in their investigations of cellular respiration, waves and chemical reactivity.

In PYP, students made acceptable progress in understanding the Islamic morals and values. Students made better progress in MYP and DP in developing more detailed knowledge and deeper understanding of Seerah, and the manners expected of a good Muslim. Progress with recitation skills, including the application of recitation rules, was less good in all phases. In Arabic as first language, students made acceptable progress in building their Arabic vocabulary and developing in their listening skills. They made limited progress in learning to use standard Arabic orally. Progress was slow in reading and writing at all phases. In PYP, most students made significant progress in learning the Arabic letters and sounds. Elsewhere, most students made steady progress in learning to decode Arabic script and pronouncing familiar words or phrases. However, students' progress in learning to independently construct news sentences to express their ideas was limited. Progress in English was outstanding. A majority of students entered the school with very little English. Through all phases almost all developed their grasp of language and understanding of literature to enable them to become successful enquirers, researchers, critical thinkers and evaluators. Most students at all stages made at least good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in applying their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts to solve increasingly complex problems. They make good progress through appropriate topics in science.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

Learning skills acquisition was outstanding in KG and DP and good elsewhere. In KG, students were actively engaged in learning. They demonstrated sophisticated levels of independence and interpersonal relationships which supported early phases of collaborative group work. They questioned and reflected in response to teacher suggestions. They gathered information to make connections to the world around them. In PYP, students were successful at solving problems and confidently accepted responsibilities and challenges. They developed their creativity and independence and flourished when inquiring, although this was not a consistent feature in all classrooms. In MYP and DP the best learning occurred when students were provided with opportunities to collaborate and discover for themselves. Skilful use of goal setting, process journals and reflections ensured that students accepted responsibility for their own learning. Inquiry and critical thinking skills were well developed and most students were able to pose open-ended, higher order questions to extend their personal investigations. Understanding was developed and shared through effective research and access to information technology as a learning tool.

[View judgements](#)

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

Attitudes, behaviour and attendance were outstanding in all phases. Students loved school, arrived on time and embraced every opportunity to learn and to show initiative. Their positive and caring relationships contributed to the harmonious school community. Even the youngest children played and worked well together. Almost all students ate healthy food and kept fit through physical activity both in and outside school. Many cycled to school each day.

Students demonstrated their understanding of Islam by being co-operative, honest, respectful and trustworthy. They knew right from wrong. Aware of their own good situation, they performed charitable deeds, including voluntary service for other less fortunate children both locally and on several continents. They celebrated local traditions in school and welcomed diversity, gaining a deep insight into other cultures through their friendships and visits to other countries. They showed awareness of the influence of Islam in Dubai on architecture, food, customs, and celebrations.

Students used their influence to make a difference, not only to school life, but also to the local and wider communities. They had instigated and sustained a range of projects such as Water for Life, which had been recognised as a charity in Scotland.

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They were involved in the Model United Nations programme, which promoted awareness of peace and security, human rights and humanitarian affairs throughout the world. They had gained the Eco Schools Award for their understanding of conservation issues and their care of the planet.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching and assessment were good in PYP and MYP and outstanding elsewhere. The very positive classroom relationships created an excellent climate for learning. New teachers were well supported in developing IB methodology. Collaborative planning and resources supported all students, including those with special educational needs, particular talents or with English as an additional language. Almost all teachers had good subject knowledge and understanding of how students learn, except in Arabic and in Islamic Education. Most teachers encouraged student initiated learning by discovery. They often answered students' questions with another question, thereby developing enquiry skills. Teaching at KG was based on play and discovery, and well supported by teaching assistants. Most lessons in core subjects demanded analysis and critical thinking. English teaching was enabling rather than instructional, ensuring that students directed their own learning. Scientific and mathematical inquiry were particular strengths, although in PYP mathematics critical thinking was insufficiently developed. Teaching in physical education and in foreign languages was very good. Widespread use of digital media devices ensured that research skills were well developed at all phases.

All students were assessed on entry using diagnostic tests, including assessment of attitudes to school. International benchmarking accurately indicated the school's performance and informed curriculum and lesson planning in most subjects. Workshops had ensured that teachers interpreted assessment data correctly. Identified needs were shared in year group and cross-phase meetings. Senior staff monitored anomalies. Anecdotal recording in children's profiles was a strength in KG. Student tracking sheets were integral to most teachers' planning. Progress was accurately assessed against international criteria, with starting points recorded and success evaluated in each unit of inquiry. Peer assessment was well used in most subjects, with particularly good examples in Year 11 English. Teachers shared good attainment through displays of students' progress, and best practice in formative assessment on the school website.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum quality was outstanding in each phase of the school. It provided a holistic, rigorous international education for all students. Well-planned courses in a broad range of subjects offered stimulating, relevant learning. Teachers shared curriculum and assessment records across phases to build on prior learning and to permit students to move smoothly to the next stage. Extensive counselling from Year 10 onwards helped the transition to universities and to the world of work. Senior leaders reviewed the curriculum systematically in each subject and across each year level. Cross-curricular links were strong, particularly in PYP. Extensive extra-curricular activities included school camps, overseas trips, the Model United Nations and the Eco Club. Links with the community had been strengthened through high quality initiatives such as the student magazine and health and safety campaigns. There were weaknesses in continuity in the Arabic and Islamic Education programmes.

Curriculum design was outstanding across the school. Teachers planned collaboratively at each year level to meet the learning needs of all students. SEN students had individual programmes tailored to meet their specific needs. PYP teachers incorporated student questions into their units of inquiry. The MYP personal project allowed students to explore what mattered to them. Students could make choices in humanities and sciences. DP students could choose from 19 subjects and from courses which developed creativity, action and service. The school offered an extensive array of activities outside the classroom to enrich all students' experience.

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

Procedures to ensure the health, safety and protection of students were outstanding. Teachers effectively supervised the safe arrival and departure of students. Maintenance procedures and record keeping were appropriately rigorous. The promotion of healthy lifestyles was a priority, and highly effective. Most pupils made very healthy choices for living. Staff were fully aware of arrangements for child protection. Students felt safe and secure in the school. The e-safety policy, to protect students from cyber-bullying among other aspects, was only rudimentary.

There was an all-pervasive atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Teachers kept accurate daily records of attendance and punctuality, and took immediate action if students were absent or late. Admission procedures were inclusive. In KG, students were observed prior to admission. However, no designated learning support was assigned to facilitate early interventions. From Years 1-13 a specialised learning support team helped class teachers to modify their schemes of work. They developed and monitored individual learning programmes in collaboration with students, teachers and parents. Counsellors provided

social and emotional support where and when necessary. A careers counsellor worked with students from Year 10 onwards to provide comprehensive guidance in preparation for life beyond school.

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

Leadership was outstanding. The senior management team comprised the principals of the primary and secondary schools, their deputies and assistants and the Director of Studies. The overall leadership of the school was secure. The amended organisational structure had enabled senior leaders to focus on ensuring delivery of the school's vision and on raising attainment. Heads of department and subject leaders had been made directly responsible for students' achievement in their area. They had thereby become more accountable for standards, more empowered, and more responsive to meeting students' needs. Many acted as role-models for effective teaching and had created teams dedicated to improvement. Senior leaders had established appropriate priorities for development, and through their clear vision were driving the school forward.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. While the process for systematic self-evaluation was firmly established, the product was inconsistent. Some areas had been appropriately evaluated and areas for development identified. Others, however, were presented as a narrative, descriptive account and lacked incisive objective evaluative comment. A few departments had an over-optimistic view of attainment and had not been able accurately to evaluate their work against international guidelines and advice. In a few instances the school's judgement of teaching and learning was too generous. The school had made significant progress in meeting the recommendations in the previous report.

Partnership with parents and the community was outstanding. Parents were extensively involved in their children's education and were consulted regularly. The school valued their views and treated them as partners. Communication was efficient and highly effective. Reporting was regular and detailed. The school had developed extensive productive partnerships within Dubai and internationally.

Governance was outstanding. The Advisory Council had a wide range of expertise in business and education. It regularly sought input from parents, students and teachers. The Council held senior leaders rigorously to account. Members had a comprehensive knowledge of the life and work of the school. They were acutely aware of the need to improve standards in Arabic.

Management was good. The day-to-day organisation of the school was efficient but the timetable was not as efficient as it could be for Islamic Education. Staff were well qualified and many had good experience.

The school had worked effectively to overcome difficulties in recruitment in some areas. Facilities had been significantly improved. The school was well equipped and resources were of high quality.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

In all subject areas Emirati students performed as well as most other students. Their attainment and progress were good in Islamic Education, Arabic, English, mathematics and science. In some classes Emirati students were a little reserved and needed encouragement to contribute to the best of their ability. The school had ensured that they, in common with all other nationalities, were fully integrated, and that their culture was appropriately respected. Good displays celebrated Emirati traditions. They participated fully in the life of the school. Overall achievement, including academic attainment, was good and on a par with others.

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

The provision for students who required learning support was good across all phases of the school. The cohesive learning support team worked in collaboration with teachers and parents to provide a high quality programme. Members of the learning support team had a collective range of abilities. Strategies to identify students with learning needs were comprehensive, and included parent identification and some student initiated action through the school counselors. In KG there was no specialist support to help with early intervention programmes and teacher development. Individual learning programmes were developed in collaboration with teachers, students and parents. They were monitored regularly and parents were informed of progress regularly. A focus on the identification and support for students with special gifts/talents had been established, with a designated staff member assigned to the role. Progress and attainment for students in the support programme were measured against modified learning outcomes. The curriculum had been adjusted to meet the individual needs of learners in most subjects. The enquiry-based pedagogy at PYP and MYP enhanced support, as students had opportunities to explore tasks through different perspectives and to demonstrate their understanding in different ways. DP students had extensive examination support to meet identified needs.

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

The quality of teaching of Arabic was inconsistent across all phases. Most teachers had secure subject knowledge but limited understanding of how students learn languages. Lesson plans were in place but they



were not always followed rigorously. Learning objectives were not always appropriate. Teachers had an acceptable range of teaching resources but they did not use them effectively to enhance students' learning. In many classes, lessons were teacher-centered with too much teacher talk. Therefore, they did not develop all four language skills appropriately. Teachers did not use assessment data effectively to plan next steps in students' learning, especially at PYP. They had low expectations. They did not offer appropriately differentiated opportunities for learning. Students had inconsistent opportunities to be independent learners or to develop their skills in critical thinking.

The school was compliant with MoE time requirements. There were some well-planned enrichment activities. The curriculum in Arabic had not been modified to fill the gaps in students' language learning skills or to meet the needs of the more able. Generally, students had few opportunities to understand and develop the use of modern standard Arabic, or to develop the quality and accuracy of their writing. The development of extended reading skills was variable. Teachers made some efforts to raise students' own ambitions in relation to language proficiency.



## 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	514	40%
	Last year	623	51%
Teachers	126		81%
Students	301		76%

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

Fewer parents responded to the survey than had been the case for the previous report. Almost all were satisfied with the work of the school. Some were critical of attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic, but in interviews others indicated total satisfaction and spoke of their children's success in Arabic as a second language. Almost all were happy with their children's attainment in English, mathematics and science. A few indicated that they had concerns about incidents of bullying and about the school's handling of such incidents. Students responded positively and indicated that they were generally satisfied with what they experienced in school. However, a minority felt that their fellow students were not well behaved. Some felt that the curriculum was too rigid and insufficiently adapted to meet their needs. A number thought that school leaders did not listen to their views. Teachers were very positive.

## 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.

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## 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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