

INSPECTION REPORT

Horizon School

Report published in April 2013

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Horizon School

Location	Al Wasl
Type of school	Private
Website	www.horizonschooldubai.com
Telephone	04-3422891
Address	PO. Box 6749, Dubai
Principal	Marion C. Sinclair
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-11 / Foundation Stage to Year 6
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	506
Students' nationalities	UK
Number of Emirati students	0 (0%)
Date of the inspection	8th to 10th October 2012

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The context of the school

Located in Al Wasl, Horizon School is a private school providing education for about 500 boys and girls from Foundation Stage to Year 6, aged three to 11 years.

The school followed the English National Curriculum. There were 31 full and part-time teachers, including the Headteacher. Almost all teachers had appropriate qualifications. They were supported by seven teaching assistants. There were four Foundation Stage classes, one class for Foundation Stage 1 and three classes at Foundation Stage 2. At this stage the number of children in each class varied from 22 to 25 and each class had a full-time teaching assistant. There were three classes in each year group from Year 1 to Year 6. The number of students in each primary class varied from 18 to 26.

Thirty nine different nationalities were represented among the student population. The Headteacher had been in post for 14 years. Seven new teachers had joined the school during the current academic session.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Outstanding

Key strengths

- Students made good or better progress in English, mathematics and science;
- The high quality staff-student relationships, which successfully promoted students' personal development, confidence, exemplary behaviour and mature attitudes;
- The outstanding teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum.
- The school's success in ensuring that students with special educational needs were given an appropriate curriculum and made good progress;
- The strong, distributed leadership across the school which fully achieved the school's mission statement.

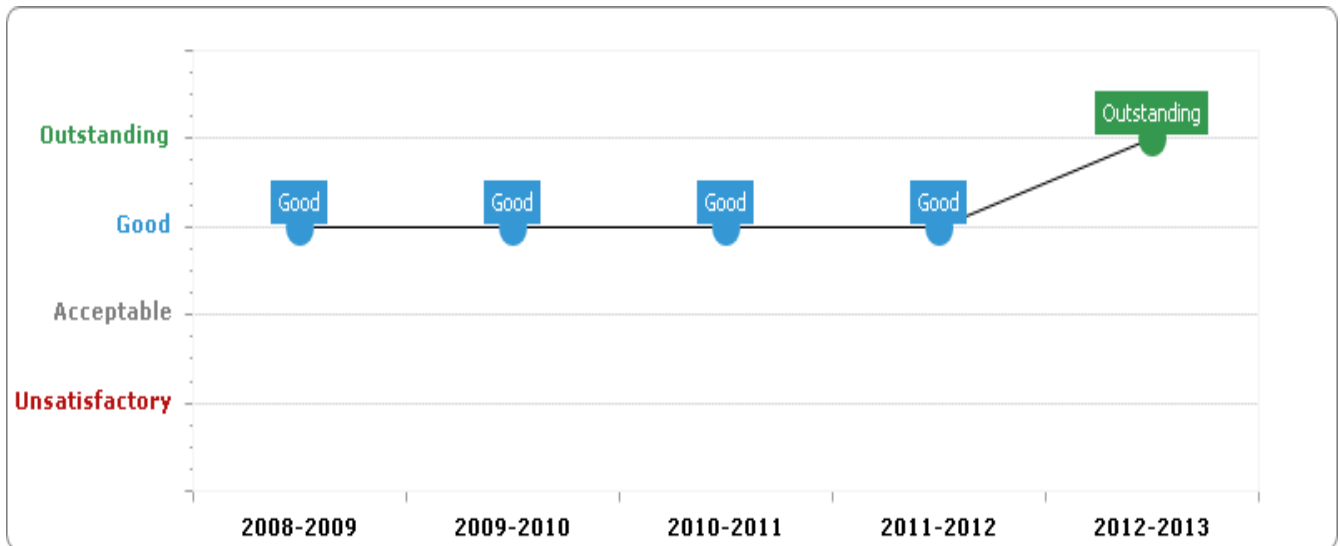
Recommendations

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and student's learning and attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic, drawing on the best practices from other subjects in the school;
- The new owners of the school work should closely with the school management team to ensure that the school maintains and further improves the educational experience for all students.

Progress since the last inspection

- The school had made improvements in the quality of student's learning and attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- The school had improved the challenge provided for the more able students;
- Better use of attainment data helped teachers focus more closely on what was needed to help improve students' progress and attainment.

Trend of overall performance



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

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Islamic Education		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Arabic as an additional language		
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good
English		
Attainment	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good
Mathematics		
Attainment	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Good
Science		
Attainment	Outstanding	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Teaching for effective learning	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of students' learning	Outstanding	Outstanding
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	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	Outstanding
Partnerships with parents and the community	Outstanding
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Students' attainment in the key subjects varied, but was mostly good or outstanding. Most Muslim students across the school demonstrated Islamic knowledge at an age-appropriate level. They had, however, limited understanding of The Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's sayings. Arabic attainment in the primary phase was acceptable. Most students in the lower grades recognised the majority of the Arabic letter sounds and could demonstrate their understanding by matching the sounds to their corresponding letters. They understood most of the teacher's instructions and were able to answer her questions using one or two words. In the higher grades, the most capable students could write short sentences from memory. In English, students' attainment was good. Students from the Foundation Stage onwards listened carefully and talked with increasing confidence as they progressed through the year groups. Older students were able to adapt their speech to meet a range of audiences and situations. Students of all ages used a wide range of vocabulary that exceeded age-related expectations. In mathematics, most students' attainment was well above average. They were increasingly confident in applying their mathematical competence in a wide variety of real-life contexts. Attainment in science was outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good in the primary phase. The youngest and oldest children were successfully developing scientific approaches to the wide range of tasks they were given. They understood the concept of fair testing from an early age and in the later years were designing their own experiments.

Students' progress in most subjects was good overall. Most students made progress with their understanding of Islamic etiquettes and rules in relation to their starting point. However, their progress with recitation skills and their ability to link their Islamic knowledge to real life was limited. Whilst progress in Arabic was good overall, progress with reading skills was slower. In English, progress was good in both phases. Writing was well structured and demonstrated increasingly sophisticated use of writing conventions. However, the quality of handwriting of a minority varied too much. Progress was outstanding in science and mathematics in the Foundation Stage and good in the primary phase. In the Foundation Stage classes children were able to compare, identify similarities and differences and explain how things worked. Progress was more variable in the primary phase. A very few students showed progress that was less than expected. The higher achieving students were making good progress in lessons and in their weekly 'challenge' sessions. Students with special educational needs made good progress.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding across the school. Children in the Foundation Stage and primary students showed a high personal sense of responsibility. They knew the golden rules of the school and applied them well. They enjoyed learning and this contributed to outstanding attendance. Almost all students demonstrated a high level of personal confidence and enjoyed excellent relationships with each other and with the staff. Healthy eating was also encouraged around the school and students could talk knowledgeably about what they needed to do to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Students' understanding of Islamic values and their awareness of different cultures were outstanding. They embraced and celebrated different cultures; especially the culture of the community they lived in. They showed great understanding of the impact of Islamic values on their lives and had an excellent appreciation of the UAE culture. Students were also capable of integrating their understanding of the local culture in different subjects effectively. Students' sense of community and environmental awareness was outstanding. They had a strong voice in the school and collaborated with their teachers well. They managed a variety of classroom roles very effectively and constantly provided suggestions to improve their work. Students were also aware and proud of their personal skills and showed creativity when developing their own projects. They could also describe factors that impacted upon their environment. They participated effectively in different environmental projects. They took care of the school environment well.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

The quality of teaching was outstanding in both the Foundation Stage and primary years. It was slightly stronger in the latter. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects and how they were learned by young children was an overall strength. The effectiveness of lesson planning was generally very high. Plans were detailed, based upon assessment information, and were regularly updated to better meet the learning needs of students. The management of time by teachers was skillful in almost all lessons. Teachers' use of resources in lessons was highly effective. Interactions between teachers and students were positive, productive and respectful at all times. Teachers' use of dialogue and questions was another overall strength; they promoted thinking and questioned their students effectively. Teaching strategies were varied in order to meet the needs of all individuals and groups of students. Teaching promoted independent learning very well across the year groups and subjects. However, teachers of Arabic and Islamic Education did not sufficiently challenge their students or promote critical thinking. Teaching was observed in non-key subjects including French, physical education, information and communication technology, 'Free-Flow' activities, music and art. The quality of teaching in these subjects was also good and, at times, outstanding.

The quality of learning was outstanding across the school. Teachers were successful in achieving the school's mission of nurturing independent learners. Students clearly enjoyed learning; their engagement in and responsibility for their own learning was extremely high. Almost all students took full responsibility for learning and almost all were engaged throughout their lessons. Students' interactions and collaboration were exemplary in almost all lessons. They worked effectively together to debate issues, solve problems, apply concepts, design experiments, create and perform dramatic sketches and help less able students. The application of learning to the real world was a common feature of lessons across the school. It was evident in all key subjects in all year groups. Students regularly made connections between different areas of learning. Students' enquiry, research and critical thinking skills were highly developed in most lessons and extended beyond the classrooms.

The quality of assessment was outstanding in both the Foundation Stage and primary years. Assessment systems and processes were well established. Comprehensive files and portfolios were available for each student. Assessment of learning was detailed and clearly linked to UK curriculum expectations. Importantly, revised targets and curriculum modifications were made as a result of what was learned through the assessment process. Year-on-year tracking of students' progress was detailed in almost all subjects and allowed teachers to identify learning targets for improvement. Teachers' knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses was very high. Teachers made ongoing, formative assessments and modified their teaching strategies accordingly. Students self-assessed and set learning targets for themselves, which they revisited frequently. The quality and effectiveness of oral and written comments to students were both high. Teachers gave guidance for improvement on a range of skills and content areas.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was outstanding. It had a clear rationale and was well designed to meet the needs of all groups of students. There were clear progression paths and a range of options for students. As well as setting out what students were expected to know and understand, it took into account the different ways they learned and promoted their confidence and independence as learners. Transitions arrangements between Foundation Stage and primary classes ensured that all students were well prepared for the next stages in their learning. The range of learning opportunities was from straight-forward teacher exposition to investigations and research. By drawing together knowledge from across traditional subject boundaries in the themes they studied and by setting tasks in real life contexts when possible, students grasped the relevance of their work. Annual curriculum reviews took parents' suggestions into account. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and community links provided

enrichment possibilities for all students. The curriculum was well resourced and ensured that students were well prepared for their next stages of education as confident and enthusiastic learners.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Outstanding arrangements were in place to ensure the health and well-being of students. The school environment was in excellent condition, very well maintained, clean and secure. The premises were secure and students felt safe. Emergency evacuations were well rehearsed and great care was taken when students went on educational visits. Healthy lifestyles were promoted effectively. Arrangements for child protection were well established and understood by all teachers. Staff members provided excellent supervision of students at all times.

The support given to students was of outstanding quality. Teachers had very good rapport with students and exemplary behaviour was a notable feature in classes and at break times. A culture of mutual respect had inspired confidence and promoted trust among teachers and students. Leaders, teachers and students displayed great pride in their school. Arrangements to manage attendance and punctuality were well established and effective. The well-being and personal development of all students was closely monitored and, as a result, teachers were able to provide effective individual guidance and excellent support. The school managed behaviour well, ensuring that a calm and harmonious learning environment prevailed.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students with special educational needs were welcomed to the inclusive school environment. Well-established systems helped teachers identified the needs of studentts with special educational needs and those needing support for learning English as an additional language. Positive links with a range of outside agencies ensured that students needing specific support received it during the school day. Almost all teachers provided sophisticated, differentiated lessons that met the needs of all learners. As a result of the integrated and highly effective support, almost all students made outstanding progress academically, socially and personally. Great care and superb advice supported students and their parents through the selection of appropriate secondary schools and the transition from primary to secondary education.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The overall leadership of the school was outstanding. The Headteacher displayed high quality leadership skills and communicated a vision that was clear and supported by all staff members. She was ably supported by a deputy who provided clear guidance and support to the supervisors and heads of department. Teachers, teaching support staff and ancillary staff members were fully involved and valued. Relationships and communication at all levels of the school hierarchy were positive and professional. The school demonstrated an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were outstanding. Systematic self-evaluation processes were well embedded in the schools' improvement planning. The school knew itself well and recognised its strengths and had identified the areas where improvement was still needed. The schools action plan was detailed and provided the staff with clear guidance on what was needed to ensure further improvement. The school had made good progress in tackling most of the recommendations from the last report, but still required work on Arabic as an additional language and Islamic Education.

Partnerships with parents and the local and wider community were outstanding. The school had very effective arrangements to communicate with parents. A significant number of parents worked voluntarily in the school on a regular basis to assist teachers in class. This valuable contribution helped to improve children's learning throughout the school. Informal contacts between class teachers and parents, often on a daily basis, ensured that there was very effective communication. Other channels such as the Parent-Teacher Association, 'class mums', a diary and the school website helped to keep parents abreast of developments in the school. Parent-teacher meetings and regular reports kept parents informed of their children's progress. Parents were often involved in the visits to places of interest in Dubai. Students learned about the needs of others through taking part in fund-raising for local and international charities.

Governance of the school was good. The ownership of the school had recently changed. A new governing body had only recently been formed. However, members of the new Board displayed a keen interest in the work of the school and they indicated that they were fully committed to ensuring that students in the school received high quality education. Plans were to structure governance so as to balance support and accountability.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was outstanding. Teachers were suitably qualified, many with significant experience. Whilst standards of teaching in Islamic Education and Arabic had improved there was still considerable scope for further improvement to bring children's experiences in these subjects up to that in other subjects. A significant team of ancillary staff helped ensure the smooth running of the school. The school provided students with an outstanding physical environment. The school operated very smoothly each day. The grounds were spacious and the classrooms were large and airy.

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي
Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Corridors were wide and open areas were well used as teaching spaces for small groups. Resources were excellent and every classroom had an interactive white board. Students had appropriate access to an excellent suite of desktop and portable computers. The large library was stocked with over 13,000 books and was very well used.

[View judgements](#)

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	57	15%
	Last year	101	19%
Teachers	12		38%
Students	There were no senior students in the school		

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

A minority of parents responded to the survey, down from last year's response. A minority of the teachers responded to their survey. Almost all parents who responded were very satisfied with the quality of education available at the school and believed that their children were making good progress in English, mathematics and science. Approximately one third of the parents believed their children were making good progress in Islamic Education whilst just over half indicated that their children were making good progress in Arabic as an additional language. All parents who responded thought that their children were safe at school and enjoyed their lessons. A majority of parents indicated that school leaders listened to their opinions, but a few indicated otherwise. Most parents believed that communication by the school was good, but a few dissented from this view. The teachers who responded to the survey held positive views about the full range of school provision.

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

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