

# INSPECTION REPORT

## St. Mary's Catholic High School

Report published in April 2013

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT St. Mary's Catholic High School

Location	Oud Metha
Type of school	Private
Website	www.stmarysdubai.com
Telephone	04-3370252
Address	PO Box 52235, Dubai
Principal	Brother Joseph Mudiyanil Joseph
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	5-17 / Grade 1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	1,952
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	4 (less than 1%)
Date of the inspection	19th to 22nd November 2012

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## The context of the school

St Mary's Catholic High School is situated in Oud Metha. The school follows the English National Curriculum. At the time of the inspection, the school had 1,952 students, most of whom attended the primary and secondary sections from Grade 1 to Grade 11, at which point they sat GCSE examinations. A number of students studied for Advanced-level examinations over one year in Grade 12, the post-16 section. Some students returned to school for a 13th year to gather further qualifications at A-level.

Approximately five per cent of students had been identified by the school as having some form of special educational need. A number of those students received some learning support from specialist staff and regular classroom support. In addition to the five members of the senior leadership team, there were 129 full-time teachers, four teaching assistants, three clinic staff and four Catholic nuns who supported the personal and social development of students. At the time of the inspection, the new Principal had been in post for a few months.

## Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

### Key strengths

- Good attainment in most subjects and outstanding progress in mathematics and science in the post-16 phase;
- The high quality of students' social development across the school, including outstanding attitudes and behaviour in secondary and post-16, and outstanding community responsibility in post-16;
- The overall quality of teaching, with outstanding learning in post-16;
- Improvements to aspects of leadership, teamwork and governance.

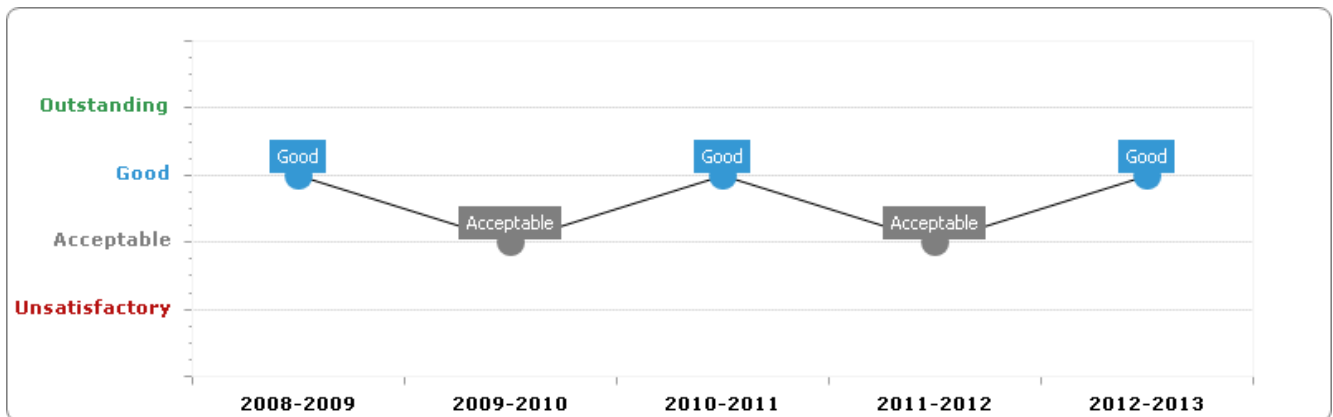
### Recommendations

- Continue to improve attainment in Arabic across the school, attainment in English in primary Grades 1 and 2, and progress in science throughout the primary phase;
- Build on good practice to continue to improve the quality of learning, particularly in primary;
- Undertake assessment of attainment, tracking of progress and feedback to students more systematically, to ensure that students understand how to improve their learning;
- Continue to bring the teaching time for Arabic at certain grades into line with regulations.

## Progress since the last inspection

- There was evidence of better progress or attainment in most key subjects in the primary phase;
- Staff had made improvements to the quality of teaching and learning, and these were now more consistent across all subjects and phases, although further work was needed;
- Teachers were working, with some success, to align assessment criteria to the curriculum. They could now track the progress of individual students more effectively, although arrangements for letting students know their strengths and weaknesses and how to improve was more limited;
- The quality of the school's self-review and improvement planning was better than before, and initiatives were being implemented more consistently across the school;
- The school was not yet fully compliant with Ministry of Education requirements for Arabic in all phases of the school, although some progress had been made.

## Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)



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

	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment was good in Islamic Education, mathematics and science. It was acceptable in Arabic, except as an additional language in secondary, where it was unsatisfactory. Attainment in English was acceptable in primary and good in secondary. In Islamic Education, the majority of students had knowledge and understanding beyond expectations, for example in the life of the Prophet (PBUH). In Arabic, most students showed reasonable proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The exception was in Arabic as an additional language in secondary where, in particular, skills in writing were weak. In English, most students were able to speak fluently and write short texts by Grade 6. By Grade 11, a majority showed attainment beyond expectations. In mathematics, almost all pupils attained well in number, for example in using ratio and proportion in primary. In the secondary grades, most students could apply their knowledge, for example in Grade 11 using the properties of circles. Students in post-16 showed well-developed skills in solving equations. A majority of students attained above curriculum expectations in science. Test results were good overall, but knowledge was better developed than enquiry skills.

Progress in primary and secondary was good in Islamic Education, English and mathematics, and acceptable in both forms of Arabic. In science, progress was acceptable in primary, good in secondary and, along with mathematics, outstanding in post-16, where most students were successful in A-level courses taken over one year. In post-16, progress in Islamic Education was good, but progress in Arabic as a first language was unsatisfactory. Progress in Islamic Education was better in understanding cultures than in recitation. Progress in Arabic as first language was slowed at secondary because the time for lessons was less than expected. Students in English made slower progress in Grades 1 and 2 than at other grades. This was because teachers did not take not enough account of the fact that English was, for most students, an additional language. In mathematics, there was steady progression in applying knowledge. Progress in science in the primary grades was hindered by planning that did not allow students to learn through activities.

[View judgements](#)

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

In all aspects of school life, students' behaviour and their attitudes towards learning were good in primary and outstanding in secondary and post-16. Almost all students showed responsibility and maturity in classes and in interactions with others. Behaviour in assemblies was exemplary. Relationships with each other, staff and visitors were very strong, and students were very courteous, respectful and sensitive to

the needs of others. Almost all students demonstrated positive attitudes towards keeping healthy. Attendance across the school was outstanding. Students showed a good understanding of Islamic values such as modesty and honesty, and were aware of how these values affected their lives. They showed respect for each other's beliefs and could recognise the common values between different faiths. They showed a good understanding of the UAE heritage and traditions, for example in their creative artwork, and were well aware of the factors behind Dubai's growth. They showed a good appreciation of their own cultures and a strong respect for the cultures of other students. Students were responsible and contributed actively to the life of the school, particularly in the post-16 phase, through the Student Council, the Community Service Programme and through service as prefects and fire marshals. They were extensively involved in charity drives to benefit the needy in the local and wider community. Their understanding of what makes a person successful was excellent and they showed good leadership and conflict resolution skills. They supported conservation efforts at school and contributed to planting trees in Dubai.

[View judgements](#)

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

Teaching had improved in primary and was now in line with the good quality at other phases. Primary teachers had improved their understanding of English National Curriculum standards. Almost all teachers had good subject knowledge. Lesson plans were now more detailed and led to better use of time in lessons. They identified more clearly the learning expected of students. Teachers' good use of spoken English supported students' progress in English as an additional language. In certain phases, the teaching of Arabic and science was only acceptable because teachers' Arabic subject knowledge was not always secure and science investigations were limited. Many teachers made use of information and communication technology (ICT) to highlight learning objectives and to support students' learning. Teachers' questioning of older students to promote dialogue and critical thinking was often of high quality in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science, but more variable in Arabic. Across the school, activities were at times too teacher-directed and did not give children enough opportunities to direct their own exploration of the world around them

Learning was acceptable at primary, good in secondary and outstanding at post-16. Almost all students were enthusiastic about their learning. Lively, challenging and interactive teaching, when it was implemented, led to a high quality of learning. This was more often seen in the higher rather than lower phases. In some subjects, for example English, mathematics and science, good collaborative learning benefited students. Overall though, students had insufficient opportunities to explore and investigate in science and to use ICT in lessons. Their opportunities to take responsibility in their learning were variable

across subjects and phases and, in particular, the primary phase. Students benefited from opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-life contexts in most subjects. Opportunities to do research, solve problems requiring an extended response, and develop critical thinking skills were not consistent across subjects in the primary and secondary phases.

Assessment was acceptable in primary and good in the rest of the school. Teachers kept general records of the progress of individual students, and parents received four helpful reports each year. In all key subjects in most phases, the main approach was to have mid-term and end-term tests. Teachers also carried out less formal assessment during whole-class question and answer sessions and when they were helping individual students. Through these approaches, teachers had a broad knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of individual students in their classes. Assessment was not always matched well to learning objectives, and, as a result, feedback to students on what they needed to do to improve their work did not have a fully positive impact on their learning. The use of assessment data to improve curriculum, teaching or support for students was weak overall in the primary phase.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good. It had a clear rationale and strong provision for students' personal development. A process of review had ensured better links to the English National Curriculum learning targets in English, mathematics and science. In the primary and secondary phases, continuity and progression were good. The post-16 curriculum prepared students well for university studies in mathematics and science. The breadth of the curriculum was good, although the range of courses and activities narrowed for students in Grades 11 and 12. Weekly time for Arabic as a first language was slightly below the Ministry of Education regulation for a few students. Tasks with different levels of difficulty were used to make provision for different groups of students, and this was done best in mathematics lessons. Enrichment of the curriculum was done in a variety of ways, including activity periods, special events, themed weeks, clubs and teams. Students expressed a desire for more field trips and opportunities to link their volunteer service with the wider community of Dubai.

[View judgements](#)

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

Provision for health and welfare was good. Procedures, for example for fire safety and child protection, complied with regulations and ensured that a healthy and safe environment was maintained. Appropriate records were kept. The learning environment was kept in a good state of repair and cleanliness. Effective levels of supervision in around the school and on school transport ensured good support and protection.

Student prefects contributed to the overall safe running of breaks. Healthy living was planned and promoted in a way which encouraged students to lead healthy lives. Staff had been trained in child protection issues and, along with students, were aware of correct procedures to follow.

The quality of support for students was good. Staff had high expectations of behaviour, and relationships were respectful and friendly. The school had good systems in place to encourage attendance and punctuality. Good advice and guidance were given through an in-class programme taken by counsellors. Senior students received guidance on career choices and were encouraged to attend career fairs with their parents.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school identified students with special educational needs on entry, and a minority were withdrawn from class at times for individual support. There were good communications with parents of these students through telephone calls, meetings and internet links. The curriculum was modified for some students. Shadow teachers gave good in-class support, but support by the class teacher was variable. The tracking of progress of students with special educational needs was good for those who were withdrawn from lessons but, for other such students, no specific targets were set to help them to improve.

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

Leadership had improved and was now good. There was a clear direction for the school. The new Principal, although only in post for a few months, had already had an impact, improving communication with, and involvement of parents. Most subject leaders and teams had managed to bring about some improvements in their areas. Many staff had worked hard and with success, for example in improving the curriculum. Relationships were very positive. Leaders at all levels had an increasing capacity to improve.

The quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning had improved and was now good. All staff had been involved in working groups to self-evaluate and improve the school. They had undertaken a series of relevant professional development tasks. These activities had led to improvements in key aspects. A range of staff had undertaken lesson observations involving all departments, with helpful feedback to teachers.

Surveys of parent, staff and student views had been carried out, and the results were being acted on. Staff had made positive progress in addressing most of the recommendations from the previous inspection report.

The school's partnership with parents had improved and was now good. There was good representation on the governing body. In response to a survey of views, the school had plans to set up a parent association. Staff ran a series of meetings for parents for different purposes. Parent representatives had been involved in a strategic planning meeting. Parents attended assemblies, and, overall, there was a strong community ethos among the parents. Communication to parents was undertaken in a variety of media, and was of good quality. Reports and meetings for parents on their children's progress had improved. The school had links with the three other schools in the St Mary's vicariate group, and with other schools, colleges and businesses through parent members on the governing body.

Governance had improved and was now good. The governing body had representation from a wide range of stakeholders. The influence of the governing body was increasing, for example through the formation of a steering group to support the new Principal in the early stages of his work. Governors played a significant role in school improvement, for example through facilitating a strategic planning workshop and the follow-up education conference for teachers. The governing body exercised accountability through receiving regular reports on progress in implementing the school improvement plan. It had overseen improvements in the school's implementation of statutory obligations, although the school was not yet fully compliant with regulations on Arabic teaching time.

Management of school life, including student attendance and punctuality, was efficient. Most staff were well qualified, and they were deployed appropriately. The premises were adequate, but there were some restrictions on specialist facilities, and students continued to have to eat their lunch outdoors. The clinic had been refurbished, and female conductors provided on all buses. There had been some re-organisation to improve conditions in the cramped playgrounds at break. Learning resources were sufficient to support teaching. There were some shortages, for example in resources to allow all students in science classes to handle experimental equipment.

[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	579	49%
	Last year	741	51%
Teachers	73		50%
Students	321		63%

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

Around half of the parents responded to the survey, a similar return rate to that for the previous year. A majority of students and teachers responded. Almost all parents were satisfied with the school. They thought that the quality of teaching and learning was good and that their children were well looked after, safe and treated fairly. Almost all thought that their children were making good progress in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science. Only a majority thought this about Arabic. These overall positive views were echoed by most students who responded to the survey. Only a majority of parents and slightly less than half of the students thought that children were actively involved in community projects or could participate in a good range of extra-curricular activities. Only around half of parents and students, and roughly two-thirds of teachers, thought that they were involved in decision-making in the school.

## 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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