

INSPECTION REPORT

American School of Dubai

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

P.O. Box 500008, UAE, Tel: +971-4-3640000, Fax: +971-4-3640001, info@khda.gov.ae, www.khda.gov.ae

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT American School of Dubai

Location	Al Barsha
Type of school	Private
Website	www.asdubai.org
Telephone	04-3950005
Address	PO Box 71188
Principal	Dr. Harold Fleetham
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Grades	3 -18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	96%
Number of students on roll	1,626
Number of Emirati students	3 (less than 1%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 16th to Thursday 19th January 2012

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The context of the school

The American School of Dubai opened in 1966 and is now located in Al Barsha. The school provided an extensive, modern facility with students divided into three separate buildings: 769 students in the Kindergarten and Elementary building, 361 in the Middle School (Grades 6-8) and 489 in the High School. Over the last two years, about 700 students had been added to the roll and the school was at full capacity with 1,609 students at the time of the inspection. Two-thirds of students came from the United States and Canada, with the rest primarily from Asia and Europe. Emirati students comprised less than two per cent of the school population.

The school followed a US curriculum and students participated in a number of external examinations: SATs, PSATs, Measures of Academic Progress (MAPs), Advanced Placement examinations (AP), American College Tests (ACT), the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and The Writing Assessment Program (WrAP). The school maintained a full staff in instruction, student services, and student support as well as administrative personnel. All of the teachers were certified. Student care and support were provided by several learning support specialists, counselors, and medical staff.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The American School of Dubai provided a good quality of education overall, with many outstanding and a few unsatisfactory features. For example, attainment and progress in English were outstanding while attainment and progress were unsatisfactory for most students in Arabic. The school did not provide students with required courses in Islamic Education, nor all of the required courses in Arabic. Students at all levels displayed outstanding understanding of economic and environmental issues. The school's ethos was one of its main strengths, with outstanding behavior of students at all grade levels, and with caring and supportive interactions observed between students and adults throughout the school. Students and teachers used the outstanding information and communication technology (ICT) resources creatively to extend and support their teaching and learning. The large facility provided opportunities for students to engage in numerous academic, creative, and athletic activities.

Since the last inspection, the school had partially met three of the four recommendations given by DSIB, but had not made any progress in one area. It had improved the curriculum so that it met the needs of more students, primarily those with learning or health needs. It had raised the progress of some students in the Elementary Arabic program; however, not all students were taking the required courses. It had finalized the child protection procedures but had not provided staff training. The school had not addressed the DSIB recommendation about the provision required for Islamic Education for Muslim students.

Key strengths

- The outstanding attainment and progress of students in English;
- The exemplary attitudes and behaviors of students, as well as their civic and economic understanding;
- The thorough and effective systems to support students with learning needs and to provide for their care, safety, and welfare;
- The creative use of ICT to by teachers and students to support and extend learning, particularly student use of laptops to access resources and track their own progress;
- The well-developed assessment practices to monitor student progress.

Recommendations

- School governors and leaders should ensure compliance with Ministry of Education (MoE) requirements for the compulsory years of study of Islamic Education and Arabic;
- School leaders should ensure that teaching across all subjects is of a consistently high quality such as that found in the majority of the lessons observed.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
English				
Attainment	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Progress	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Science				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good

Students' attainment ranged from outstanding to unsatisfactory. Attainment in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language was unsatisfactory at all grades. Attainment in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable in elementary and unsatisfactory at middle school and high school. Students in these subject areas had a poor command of the language, were able to understand and speak using basic vocabulary and colloquial Arabic but they could not write at age-appropriate levels. Attainment in English was good in the Kindergarten, and outstanding in the middle and high schools. Attainment in mathematics was good in the Kindergarten and elementary phases, and outstanding in the middle and high school phases. Attainment in science was good at all phases. Most students performed well on both internal and external measures of attainment. Students in English, mathematics, and science demonstrated strong critical thinking skills, and independent learning skills. A few students required more challenging classes across all subject areas.

Students' progress also ranged from outstanding to unsatisfactory. Progress in Islamic Education was unsatisfactory throughout all phases. Progress in Arabic was unsatisfactory in the high school but acceptable in the other phases. In English, progress was outstanding at all levels. In mathematics, progress was good in the Kindergarten and elementary phases and outstanding in the middle and high schools. Students' progress in science was good across all levels. All students could gauge their progress to improve during lessons; students frequently worked in pairs or groups and helped each other to make progress. Students with special learning needs were well-supported and consequently made accelerated progress in most subjects.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

Students' attitudes and behaviour were outstanding across all phases. Relationships between adults and students were constructive, respectful, and friendly. Students were highly responsive to others, with strong capacity to participate actively and enthusiastically in all aspects of school life. They were all able to organize themselves with minimal adult supervision. They showed a strong capacity to formulate ideas and initiate worthwhile activities. Attendance over the last full term was good. Students' understanding of Islam, local traditions and culture was good across the school. Almost all students exhibited good levels of understanding and the awareness of the importance of Islam in contemporary society in Dubai. They had a good understanding of the culture and traditions of Dubai. Almost all were aware of the multi-cultural aspects of Dubai, and the need to respect Dubai's diversity. Students' wider knowledge and deeper understanding of Islam and the culture of Dubai was less well developed. Students' civic, economic, and environmental understanding was outstanding across the school. Many students took on roles in student government and almost all participated in elections for student council. Students were familiar with the economic development of Dubai and the Emirates and were able to make complex connections in discussing these themes. Students exhibited concern about the environment and their community and initiated activities to make improvements in both areas within their school.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

Teaching for effective learning was good across all phases. Most teachers had proficient understanding of their subjects and of how children learn, however, this was not the case in all subjects. Most teaching showed strong teacher-student interactions, including dialogue and questioning. Teachers provided for active learning, discovery, investigations, exploration and high levels of self-direction. Most teachers skillfully incorporated small-group and paired learning activities. Lessons often involved critical thinking, independent learning and self-evaluation. Resources were effectively used, particularly ICT. However, not all teachers in all subjects provided students with effective learning opportunities. Daily lesson planning was not consistently explicit, and lesson objectives were not clear to all learners. A broader range of teaching strategies needed to be incorporated into some subjects. The quality of teaching in other subjects was good, except in Arabic, where there was over-reliance on a single method and the low expectations impeded students' attainment and progress.

The quality of students' learning was good across all phases. There were high levels of engagement, motivation and responsibility in most lessons. Learners demonstrated sustained focus and strong capacity to engage in tasks. They could discuss and explain their learning clearly. Interaction, collaboration, enquiry, critical thinking and the application of understanding to the real world were strong features of learning. Students of all ages helped one another. Arabic learning was inadequate in the middle and high school. Students in all subjects needed more opportunities to question, comment and demonstrate their learning.

The school's use of assessment to measure learning was outstanding at all levels. It had a strong assessment program in place for Grades 2 to 10 in mathematics, reading, and English; in other subjects it was limited to classroom assessments. Staff members worked together in grade level or subject area groups to understand students' weaknesses and to modify instruction as necessary to improve its

effectiveness. Parents were required to attend a meeting to understand their children's assessment scores. Teachers were effective in identifying student weaknesses and using assessment information to help students to improve. Students often assessed their own work and that of their classmates.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good

The quality of curriculum was good overall. However, Islamic Education was not offered and Arabic did not meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education. In all other subjects, the curriculum had breadth and balance, continuity and progression, and supported students' personal development. Teachers and subject leaders used the American Education Reaches Out (AERO) standards and benchmarks in planning their curricula. The skillful use of technology by teachers and students greatly enhanced the curriculum. In the Elementary School, the use of reader's and writer's workshops resulted in skillful listening, speaking, reading and writing in English. Middle School students benefited from cross-curricular links, particularly when preparing for their 'Week Without Walls' program, when history, science, English, and mathematics were effectively integrated. The High School curriculum was also supported through the use of ICT in research and building analytical skills. Additionally, students participated in a wide range of extra-curricular courses, including performing and fine arts, world languages, physical education, athletics and other special events.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of students were outstanding. The buildings were clean and maintenance teams were diligent in identifying and addressing any maintenance issues. Security was rigorous with regular practices of emergency evacuations. Student safety was further ensured by excellent supervision, which achieved a balance of care and allowing students to take responsibility for their actions. The school actively addressed any concerns about buses with students' safety and well-being of utmost importance. Medical facilities and care were of the highest quality with staff vigilant in monitoring

students' health and promoting healthy living. Staff were familiar with but had not had training in the child protection policy which was recently agreed and built on existing practice. Students' academic and personal development was routinely monitored at meetings of teaching, support and guidance staff. Concerns were promptly addressed through carefully planned intervention agreed with the student and parents.

The school did not recognize any students with special needs nor use the term when describing students who required extra support. However, inspection showed that about eight per cent of students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 received support from the learning support team. This included students with identified learning difficulties, medical conditions, sensory impairments, and other obstacles to progress. The provision to assess students and deliver services for them was of high quality, including in-class support and small-group work. Data showed that following intervention almost all students receiving support made accelerated progress and achieved good academic outcomes.

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	Outstanding
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

The quality of leadership in the school was good. There was a well-developed plan for succession as the school would soon be experiencing a significant change in top and mid-level leaders. Leaders had involved all stakeholders in re-defining the mission and vision of the school and in developing action plans. While there were effective leadership teams throughout the school, they operated somewhat independently of each other, affecting the cohesiveness of some of the programs. There was insufficient leadership of the Arabic language program. The capacity for the school to improve was good.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. The school was participating in a self-evaluation and had broadened the scope of its work significantly. All stakeholders, including students, were involved in the process; action committees had begun to work on addressing the plan's goals. The school had only partially addressed the recommendations from last year's inspection. They had improved the curriculum to

better meet the needs of students and finalized child protection procedures. However, they were not in compliance in providing Islamic students with the required program of study. Similarly, their Arabic program was not sufficiently developed to meet the statutory requirements or the needs of students.

The school's partnerships with parents and the community were outstanding. The school communicated very effectively with parents and provided them with resources to support their child's learning. There were many opportunities for parents to become actively involved in activities; one outstanding example was a large organic garden designed and developed by parents, used for learning by many classes and tended by parents and children. The school welcomed parent involvement and included parents in self-evaluation and planning.

Governance was acceptable. While the governing body was well-informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses and provided advice and guidance to school leaders, it had not ensured that statutory requirements regarding Islamic Education and the provision of Arabic had been met. The board had planned well for the significant turnover of leaders to occur at the end of the school year. The board and school leaders reported that it held the current leaders accountable. The governing board had instituted practices to ensure good communication with parents and was attentive to their concerns.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources, was outstanding. High numbers of qualified staff provided for the learning, safety, and health needs of the students. The multi-building campus was safely and efficiently managed; traffic and safety routines were well-established and monitored. Security was outstanding. Teachers were highly qualified and a number of staff members had been added for learning support and to improve the Arabic language program.

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	99	10%
	Last year	220	27%
Teachers	61		40%
Students	239		66%

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

Only a tenth of the parents responded to the survey; more than a third of teachers and two thirds of the senior students responded to their surveys. Most parents and students agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of education at the school. Both groups also agreed that they were getting the education they expected from the school. Parents agreed that their children were making good progress in English, mathematics and science, but there was less confidence about progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first or additional language. Parents reported that their children were safe and happy at school and enjoyed most lessons. On the different aspects of provision parents were broadly positive in their views of the school and its leaders, with only a very few parents expressing dissatisfaction. However, nearly two-thirds of parents did not know what the school had done about the inspection recommendations, nor almost half of the teachers know. Most parents, students and teachers agreed that the school provided good quality resources to support teaching and learning. Students' comments indicated that they felt safe and that they enjoyed the wide variety of activities offered by 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

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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