

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Khaleej National School

Report published in April 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Khaleej National School

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemsakns.com
Telephone	04-2822707
Address	P.O Box 26780 Dubai
Principal	Nigel Cropley
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	4-18 years
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2229
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	1262 (57%)
Date of the inspection	25th to 28th November

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The context of the school

Al Khaleej National School, which is located in Al Garhoud, is a private school that provides education in English to boys and girls aged 4 to 18 years. At the time of inspection, there were 2,229 students on roll the majority were of Emirati nationality. Attendance for the last full academic term was good.

The school, which is identified as a US curriculum school, had aligned with the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and mathematics, and with California state standards in science. The school was delivering the UAE Ministry of Education standard in Islamic Education and Arabic.

The school is organised into four stages: Kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high school. Classes up to Grade 4 had both boys and girls; from Grade 5 and upwards boys and girls were placed in separate classes. The high school is a college-oriented programme and students are graded from A to F in each course. Prior to graduation students are expected to take the MAP, SAT, SAT 1, and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). A minimum of 30 Carnegie units or credits must be earned by each student, in order to graduate with a high school diploma from the school. The school employed 133 teachers, all were qualified with either Diplomas or Bachelor degrees, and 36 teaching assistants. The majority of teachers held teaching qualifications. In the last year, approximately one quarter of the teachers were new to the school. Most teachers were Arab nationals.

The inspection took place in a week of mourning for the Al Khaleej National School community.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Strong and effective support for individual students' demonstrated particularly well during the inspection;
- An outstanding understanding of Islamic values, including respect and consideration for the needs of others;
- The improved curriculum in Kindergarten;
- Students' good understanding of the local community and local culture.

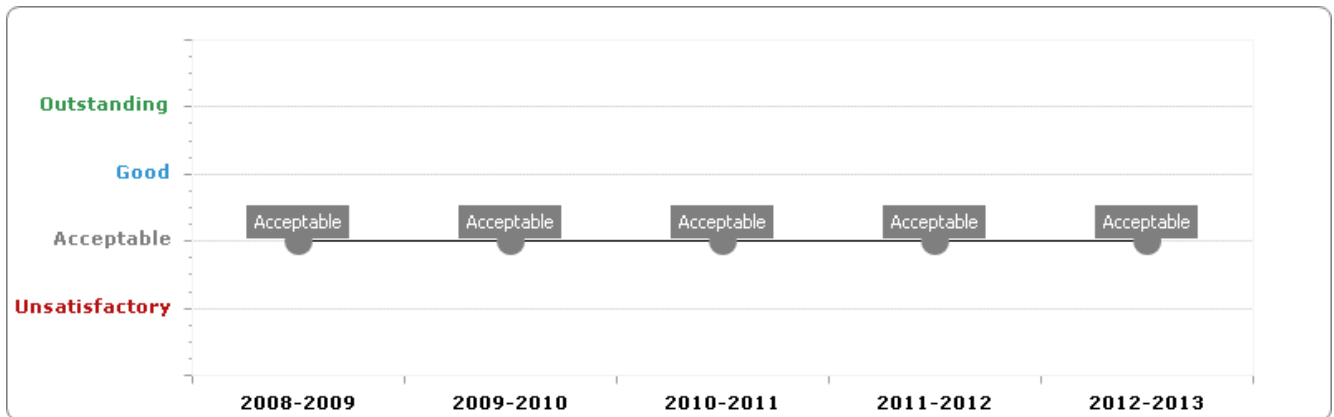
Recommendations

- Raise attainment and progress in all key subjects across all phases by using data to track and monitor students' progress more closely to increase the level of challenge and raise expectations in lessons;
- Use externally validated assessments to moderate the school's own assessments and to give staff, the students and their parents, a realistic view of students' attainment in an international context;
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in school by developing teachers' understanding of how to meet the differing needs of groups of students;
- Support and encourage students to be more collaborative and interactive during lessons;
- Evaluate the learning outcomes of all students more consistently by encouraging peer and self-assessment more regularly
- Teachers to provide written feedback more regularly to students, to indicate exactly what they need to do in order to improve
- Develop resources and facilities in order to ensure sufficient provision for all students in school, including those with special educational needs

Progress since the last inspection

- The outstanding understanding of Islamic values and local awareness
- An improved curriculum in Kindergarten
- The schools progress was impeded as result of the decline in attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language in Elementary and a decline in students' progress in English in High School.
- An increase in overall student numbers had impacted negatively on the availability of provision

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	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	Acceptable
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in Islamic Education was good in elementary acceptable in the rest of the school. Most students showed adequate Quran recitation skills. They knew the basic aspects of worship and rules in Islam and were aware of key Islamic values such as seeking knowledge and the importance of visiting patients. Most students showed an acceptable knowledge of the Prophets' stories. In Arabic as a first language, most students had listening and speaking skills in line with curriculum expectations. Writing skills were weaker across the school. In Arabic as an additional language, most students had acceptable listening and speaking skills. They could recognise and pronounce pre-learned words, phrases and sentences. However, particularly in middle and secondary grades, the majority struggled to use what they had learnt to construct sentences to convey simple ideas. In English, attainment was acceptable in all phases. Across the school most students were attentive listeners. In Phase 4 students' strengths in spoken English showed in lively class discussions. In all phases, students' writing skills were underdeveloped. In Mathematics, attainment was acceptable across all phases. Students in the early years worked very well with practical resources, while older students did well when given opportunities to connect mathematical concepts to real life situations. Attainment in science across the school was acceptable. A majority of students attained at a level generally in-line with curriculum expectations. They had an understanding of key concepts, ideas and theories in science. Performance on the MAP test was broadly in-line with age and grade level expectations however performance on the TIMSS test was below the international average. Internal test data for grades 10, 11 and 12 showed a slightly improving trend over a three-year period.

Progress in Islamic Education was acceptable in elementary but was good in middle and high school. The majority of students had developed deep understanding of the Fundamental concepts of Islam. From their starting point, the majority of students made good progress in understanding of Islamic values in middle and high school particularly in the girls' section. Most students studying Arabic as a first language made acceptable progress against curriculum expectations. Their progress in listening, speaking and knowledge of grammar was acceptable. Students in primary made less progress in developing their writing skills as other phases. The majority of primary students studying Arabic as an additional language made good progress in listening and speaking skills; but only aligned to curriculum expectations in the middle and secondary phases. In English, progress was acceptable in all phases of the school. In middle school students' writing skills were benefiting from daily journal entries. However, across all phases, students' writing for other purposes was not progressing as well. In Mathematics, progress was acceptable in all phases. Most students made gains in knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the lesson learning objectives. Progress in science across the school was acceptable. MAP data for grades 1 to 10 showed signs of improving progress. However, progress in lessons was mostly acceptable but

often inconsistent between classes and grades. Progress in knowledge and understanding was better than enquiry and investigational skills. Most groups of students made similar progress although girls made greater progress than boys.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning was acceptable. Students had positive attitudes and could work for short periods without teacher intervention. Kindergarten children were willing participants even though proficiency in the English language was a barrier to progress. Girls were more successful in the learning than boys in the senior phases. There was good learning when there was good classroom management especially of mixed-ability groups. Group activities in some Kindergarten and elementary classes lacked focus and as a consequence the development of key learning skills was inconsistent. Few opportunities for collaborative work in elementary and high school meant that students' lacked the skills to co-operate and produce good work. At times overly didactic teachers impeded the learning and this prevented more students to achieve higher outcomes. High school students had good subject knowledge but were given limited opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. The use of ICT by students was inconsistent across the school.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Personal responsibility was good across the school. Almost all students behaved responsibly and co-operatively both in lessons and around the school during breaks. They treated each other, and their teachers with courtesy and respect. When occasion required, they displayed great sensitivity towards others' needs. Most demonstrated awareness of healthy lifestyles and children in Kindergarten especially enjoyed outdoor activities. Students' attendance, at 96 percent, was good and punctuality was improving.

Students at all levels had an excellent understanding of the importance and relevance of Islamic values in modern life. Students enjoyed and highly valued the numerous opportunities in the school to discuss and research Islamic-related topics. They developed their religious and cultural awareness through a range of extra-curricular activities. Students had a strong awareness of the UAE culture and heritage, and of wider world cultures, as a result of activities and awards provided by the school. They demonstrated respect and compassion as expected by Islam.

Students with particular responsibilities, such as the student council, wanted the best for their school and community. They had raised significant donations for good causes. Their concern for the environment drove their recycling initiative. Most students knew the value of hard work and enjoyed challenges. Teams had performed well in business enterprise competitions. Students in all phases, and older students particularly, were now ready to initiate and lead further change for the benefit of the school and community.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching for effective learning was acceptable in all phases. The quality of teaching of Arabic as an additional language, Islamic Education, English and mathematics was better than that observed in other classes. Overall in the key subjects and across all phases, poor classroom management, and a lack of challenge and low-level expectations had contributed to less effective teaching. Teaching in the other subjects including art and accounting had promoted more interactive learning. Teachers focused on developing specific skills and cross-curricular links. Teachers in Kindergarten had created good learning environments and demonstrated a secure understanding of how children learn. The teaching of girls was more effective than for boys in middle and high school and in all the key subjects. Only a few teachers had developed strategies to differentiate learning to meet the needs of a wide range of students. Teaching of students with special educational needs was acceptable but many mainstream lessons had not built on the progress these students were capable of making.

The quality of assessment was acceptable across the school. Teachers used a range of internal assessment systems to evaluate students' attainment and progress. Data was also gathered from standardised international assessments such as MAP, TIMSS and PIRLS. Early assessment of students was underdeveloped and information on the progress of gifted and talented students and others with special educational needs was limited. There was insufficient data on Kindergarten children, such as their starting points and levels of achievement as learners of English as a second language. Teachers in other phases did not always demonstrate a good understanding of the individual needs' of students and were uncertain of their actual progress in lessons. A minority of teachers planned sufficiently well or differentiated their approach to meet their needs effectively. Few teachers had encouraged peer and self-assessment and the quality of written feedback was inconsistent.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum had a clear rationale and values, with the Common Core State Standards underpinning key subjects. It was good in Kindergarten and acceptable in the other phases. The language needs of students were well considered, as were the students' culture and heritage. The curriculum had breadth and balance, and was reviewed and modified regularly based on student needs. There was effective planning and adjustment of teacher allocation, in order to ensure smooth transitions between phases. Successful cross-curricular links were evident in the lower Elementary and Kindergarten, with occasional use in higher grades. Opportunities for projects and research took place in some subjects, where students developed business ideas and applied their skill and talents. However, there was room for greater use of enquiry to promote independent learning at all levels. A wide and interesting array of enrichment and extracurricular activities were offered, both within the school in classes or after school, and while interacting with the local community.

Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students was acceptable in all phases. The school had made adjustments to the curriculum in order to meet the needs of all students and some teachers had made appropriate modifications in their lessons. The school provided limited options for students to meet their specific talents, interests and aspirations. As a result, the needs of some groups of students' were not being adequately met; including those of boys, students with special educational needs, gifted and talented and ELL students. Middle school students had a few elective choices and the 11th and 12th graders could select a literature or science stream to follow. Individual student interests were further accommodated by a large selection of enrichment activities after school but not all students took advantage of them.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements to ensure health and safety were good across all phases of the school. Security staff, CCTV cameras and an efficient procedure for signing in visitors ensured against the entry into the school of unauthorised persons. Coded locks were also fitted to school access points and a further coded access system ensured security in the kindergarten. The Site Operations Manager and senior leaders monitored the implementation of contracts to ensure health and safety. These included bus safety, fire prevention, evacuation procedures, facility maintenance, food service, and the lock-down policy and procedures. The

site provided a clean and safe environment although some classrooms were small for the number of students using them. The school kept good records of incidents and actions taken.

Arrival and departure of buses was well supervised to ensure student safety and took place away from the area where students were dropped off in private vehicles. Senior leaders and staff effectively monitored student departure after school. The school emphasised child protection policy and fire evacuation procedures in the induction process for staff. Medicines and hazardous substances were stored in suitable locked cabinets. The school clinic staff provided medical services and delivered health education programmes. The school also promoted healthy living in many aspects of school life. Clinic staff monitored and provided advice on issues such as obesity and diabetes. The school had a planned maintenance programme with specific priorities identified.

Staff-student relations were generally good across all phases. Management of attendance and punctuality was effective with improved mechanisms for monitoring punctuality at the start of the school day. There were good pastoral care mechanisms through a variety of leadership roles. Most teachers knew their students well and the referral mechanism was seen to be effective in providing opportunity for early intervention. Behaviour management was mostly effective with an emphasis on promoting positive behaviour. The process for identifying students with special educational needs was good, with scope to refine the process for identifying gifted and talented students. However provision for students with special educational needs was variable; it was best when such students had one-to-one withdrawal support or shadow support in mainstream lessons. Provision for careers advice and support was effective especially in the high school.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership of the school was good. The principal and his team were very proactive where improvement was needed. They acted swiftly to address any deficiencies and new leaders had been appointed to facilitate this process. Senior leaders were well supported by middle managers who shared a clear direction and commitment to the values of the school. Leaders were clearly focused on achieving the best outcomes for students and as a result were keen to address the recommendations made by the previous inspection. However, the team faced challenges linked to recruitment and resourcing. Inconsistencies in the quality of leadership at middle management level held up the rate of improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The Principal and his team had an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Self-evaluation documents and action plans were in

place and evaluation of teaching and learning informed professional development. The school self-evaluation documents contained SMART targets but the timeline for improvement was sometimes too ambitious. Middle leaders' inability to effectively self-evaluate hindered the improvement process in some subjects. For example, the school had introduced new external benchmarks, which were not fully understood and applied by middle managers and teachers.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Key members of school staff were approachable and parents' voices were strong. However, a majority of parents felt that the school needed to strengthen their communication process through less formal forums such as coffee mornings. Partnerships were beneficial with the community and partner schools. There was a strong sense of community, which allowed parents to play an active part in the lives of their children. There were nevertheless missed opportunities to capitalise on the schools' international community to raise students' global awareness.

Governance was acceptable. Governors held the school accountable and received regular updates from the principal. The GEMs team supported the school through monitoring visits. The governors had high expectations for the school but needed to deploy more resources to support the dedicated leadership team in achieving their goals. The school was growing quickly and parents and students had voiced their concerns about the limited space in some classes and its negative impact on the quality of learning. Parents wanted more clarity about governance' strategies to address these issues effectively.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. Staff held teaching qualifications but most lacked pedagogical expertise to fully meet the needs of different groups of students such as boys, SEN, gifted and talented. There was a good number of teaching assistants in school but the quality of their input within lessons varied. New leadership of key areas across the school had been appointed and daily routines were efficient. The school premises were effectively managed. Teachers' turnover was an issue as it hindered the school improvement process. Also the school's learning resources were not always fully utilised by teachers. This was the case with the science laboratory. Modern technologies were limited as the number of students increased. The lack of space in classrooms was an obstacle to the implementation of effective learning activities such as participative and collaborative exercises. Outdoor playgrounds and sporting facilities were also limited and inadequately shaded, which limited their usage. Students also mentioned the absence of shower facilities in physical education.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school was inclusive and willing to enroll students with special educational needs (SEN) except where the perceived need was so severe that the school could not accommodate it. There was a well-developed SEN policy catering for students from the point of entry to the development of Individual Educational Plans (IEP). Teachers referred students to the special educational needs coordinator for identification of and support for perceived needs. There was clear evidence of IEPs in most teachers' folders, however this was not evidently central to lesson planning as most plans did not specifically refer to the ongoing nature of agreed IEPs. Best practice was observed where the IEP targets were linked to planned differentiation in the lesson plans. Assessment emphasis was principally on summative rather than formative assessment. Scope existed to develop a combination of summative and formative assessment on a timed basis so that ongoing progress could be measured and responded to. Alongside the SEN policy was a recently-developed policy for Gifted & Talented students; plans were in place to implement this policy in 2013/14. Although the SEN policy was supported by an extensive range of support instruments including teaching strategies for successful support, differentiation and the identification of needs, these were not fully implemented in lessons. The quality of support was variable between the support provided by mainstream teachers across and between phases and the support for individual students. As students moved up the phases, the quality of support was less effective. Parents were involved in supporting the school on entry and in developing and reviewing IEPs. Some parents also supported reinforced learning at home. An information session for parents about how to identify possible needs and how to support learning at home was planned; this had yet to be carried out.

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

The quality of teaching in Arabic as a first language varied across the school. Teaching in girls' classes was slightly better than that of the boys'. Teaching in primary was slightly less effective. While most teachers had secure subject knowledge, they were less confident at teaching and handling younger students. Where their classroom management was effective, they helped the children make good progress. Teachers' questioning and instructions often supported students' learning well. They benefited from constructive feedback on how to improve their pronunciation and grammar. Although Lessons were effectively planned, too often the textbook was followed routinely and this resulted in little attention being given to students' needs and interests. Teaching strategies were suitable for the average students while the less able students were not always actively engaged. Curriculum plans were reviewed annually. However, this did not result in improved and engaging learning opportunities for students. Rare writing opportunities were a significant weakness in the curriculum in many grades.

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	244	16%
	Last year	186	14%
Teachers	95		70%
Students	239		65%

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

Overall, stakeholders responded favorably about the school. Parents liked the school and indicated that they trusted the school to keep their children safe in and out of the classroom. They thought communication was good and they had an understanding of how their children were performing. However parents who met the inspection team felt the two-way communication needed to be sharper. Most felt confident about approaching teachers and/or administrators with any questions they had. Overall they were pleased with the management of the school but several were concerned about school timings particularly for students living in Sharjah. They expressed concern about how late those students arrived home. Students for the most part enjoyed attending the school and were pleased with their teachers and classes. Several students, however, recognised there were differences in teachers' approaches to learning. Both parents and students had grave concerns about the large class sizes and cramped rooms. They were also unclear about GEMS way forward with this issue. Teachers were mostly positive about the school and enjoyed interacting with the students. A majority of students wanted more electives. Concerns were also expressed about issues related to PE facilities such as having no showers and female students participating in outdoor sports in view of workers.

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

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