

INSPECTION REPORT

Raffles International School South Campus

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Raffles International School South Campus

Location	Um Suqeim
Type of school	Private
Website	www.rafflesis.com
Telephone	04 4271223
Address	PO Box 122900, Dubai
Principal	Donavon Carl Reinsmoen
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-11 / Foundation Stage to Grade 5
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	790
Number of Emirati students	135 (14%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 5th to Wednesday 7th December 2011

Contents

The context of the school	3
Overall school performance 2011-2012.....	3
How has the school progressed since the last inspection?	3
Key strengths.....	4
Recommendations.....	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?.....	7
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?.....	8
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	9
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	10
How good are the leadership and management of the school?.....	11
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?	13
What happens next?.....	14
How to contact us.....	14
Our work with schools	15

The context of the school

Raffles International School – South Campus is located in Um Suqeim. There were 798 girls and boys aged between three and 11 years, enrolled in Kindergarten (Foundation Stage) through Grade 5. There were 84 nationalities represented among the student population. The school delivered a Montessori curriculum in the Kindergarten and the Cambridge Primary Curriculum in Grades 1 to 5.

Significant growth in the number of Kindergarten children had led to the establishment of seven new classes. Ensuring consistent curriculum delivery by the new teachers was a challenge for school leaders. All teachers were qualified and all Kindergarten teachers held Montessori qualifications. About 14 per cent of the students were Emirati. There were a few students with special educational needs on the school register. Provision for these students in specialist rooms was excellent. The school was operating for the first year as a Kindergarten and primary school.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The overall performance of Raffles International School - South Campus was good. Improvements had occurred in several aspects of the school's work. Leadership was good because there had been significant effort and success in developing a cohesive team focused on improvement. Teaching was monitored and leaders were aware of the challenges posed by a large increase in the number of children in the Kindergarten and the appointment of several new teachers. There was a good culture of self-evaluation and leaders knew the school well. Partnership with parents was excellent and governors supported the work of the school in a highly effective manner. This was achieved partly through the School Advisory Council which was representative of a wide range of stakeholders, including parents.

Students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education, Arabic and science in the primary years had not improved since the previous inspection. Across the other key subjects, most students attained well and made good progress in lessons. The strongest elements of the school were the outstanding attitudes and behaviour of the students. They engaged with their learning enthusiastically and diligently. Respect for others was a consistent feature of students' behaviour. The quality of teaching was inconsistent in some year groups, as teachers did not always challenge students appropriately, especially the higher attaining

ones. Targeted support for students with special educational needs was highly effective. In the Kindergarten a majority of teachers delivered the Montessori curriculum well. However, children were inconsistently supported and extended at the appropriate stages of learning. The school's leaders demonstrated good capacity to make further improvements.

Key strengths

- The attitudes and behaviour of the students were outstanding;
- Kindergarten children demonstrated excellent levels of independence;
- The school ensured the health and safety of all students at all times;
- Support for students with special educational needs and those studying English as an additional language was highly effective;
- Most leaders were very committed to school improvement.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment and improve progress in Islamic Education, Arabic and science for all primary students;
- Achieve greater consistency of teaching and learning across all grades and ensure the progressive development of learning skills;
- Use accurate assessment data more effectively to meet the needs of all students, especially the higher attaining students;
- Build on current good practice to consistently support and extend the learning experiences of each child in the Kindergarten.

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

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

Overall, attainment was good across subjects in the Kindergarten and in three primary subjects. A majority of the students exceeded expectations. Where attainment was good in Islamic Education, students understood the importance of Islam in their daily lives. In Arabic, attainment was as expected. Students displayed speaking, reading and writing skills that were, in general, on a similar level to their peers across Dubai. Students of Arabic as a first and additional language did not extend their speaking to complex levels

of standard Arabic. Their writing was not imaginative. In English, a majority of students had a sound grasp of how to link their thoughts, speech and writing tasks into well-formed and, occasionally, extended expression. For students of English as an additional language, attainment levels were impressive. Most could discuss topics with their peers well. Their writing skills, while not at the same level of their peers, were also good when compared to international standards for additional language learners. In mathematics, students had strong mental mathematics skills and could solve problems accurately and efficiently. Scientific skills were good in the Kindergarten but, in the primary years, students had memorised knowledge rather than understood scientific concepts and processes. Attainment was limited by the lack of well-developed scientific experiences.

Progress was generally good for a majority of students. It was better in the Kindergarten than in the primary years across most subject areas. Kindergarten children had developed a range of key skills in language, writing and number operations. They showed confident, independent expression of thoughts, good problem-solving strategies and the ability to link their scientific knowledge to the world around them. In the primary years, progress was less consistent. Students' progress in Islamic Education, Arabic and science slowed, due to the lack of progressive development of specific subject skills. Students did not have enough time to expand, refine and apply their various skills to levels where they were performing independently of their teachers. Students with special educational needs made good progress most of the time. When teaching was good, clear and achievable goals were in place that provided sufficient, appropriate challenge for students with special educational needs. At other times, students with special educational needs were left to cope with unrealistic goals, towards which they made little progress.

The attainment and progress of Emirati students were generally in line with all other students. They developed good speaking and listening skills in Arabic and English. In writing and problem-solving tasks progress was slightly lower. As almost all were second language English learners, their capacities to write freely, solve problems or lead exploratory learning were limited. Emirati students were enthusiastic participants in learning and they listened well to their teachers and peers.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Not Applicable

Attitudes and behaviour were outstanding. Students behaved exceptionally well in lessons and around the school and this contributed significantly to their learning. Students had strong relations with their teachers and other students, engaged well in a wide range of learning activities and accepted guidance when required. Students chose to eat healthy food and took part in a wide range of sporting activities including swimming, golf and scuba-diving, which helped them to lead healthy lives. A majority of students across the school demonstrated an age-appropriate understanding of Islam. Students presented a very good example of a multi-cultural society, demonstrating sharing, mature problem-solving methods and exchanging experiences. They successfully interacted with friends of different cultures. Most students talked confidently about UAE culture; this was supported thoroughly in school displays. However, a significant minority of students did not regularly display a deep understanding of how their own culture and the other cultures in the school interacted. Students' civic, economic and environmental understanding was good. Students made a positive contribution in school and the local community. For example, they had been engaged in activities to raise money for victims of the earthquake in Turkey and had sent shoe boxes with essential items to the construction workers in their local community. They engaged well in environmental projects such as beach cleaning and tree planting. Students respected the school buildings and took positive, independent actions to keep it clean. They washed windows and recycled plastic and paper for example. However, students' understanding of how Dubai has developed was limited.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Not Applicable
Assessment	Good	Good	Not Applicable

Teaching for effective learning was good overall. In the Kindergarten, teachers maintained a calm, purposeful and structured learning environment, within which children could choose their activities. They planned well for individuals and successfully encouraged students to be independent learners. In the primary classes, most teachers planned well, offered a good variety of activities and made effective use of questions to check students' understanding. Many teachers made good use of information and communications technology (ICT). Teachers in the Kindergarten did not consistently and progressively support learners. Across the primary phase, teachers did not systematically build on the students' Kindergarten experiences by developing learning skills. They did not consistently meet the needs of all students in lessons, particularly the higher attaining ones. Teaching in Arabic did not support specific skill development effectively. Teaching in other subjects varied from acceptable to good.

Learning was good across the school. Kindergarten children were highly focused in class, clearly demonstrated independence and were responsible for their learning in many ways. They were actively involved in the process, often freely using resources to explore and enhance their learning. In the primary years students were motivated, worked well independently and, when given the opportunity, collaborated well with others. Although there were some learning contexts where collaboration and critical thinking skills were required, they were not being developed systematically across all grades.

Assessment of learning was good across both phases. In the Kindergarten, assessment was an integral part of the learning process. Teachers observed individual children across a range of activities and carefully planned their next steps in learning. Across the primary phase assessment was good with outstanding features. The school staged diagnostic assessments at the start of each year, followed by regular internal assessments to chart students' progress. Assessment data was collected and effectively analysed to identify strengths and weaknesses in students' performance. Students used peer and self-assessment to understand their next steps. Teachers did not always make effective use of assessment information in lessons to meet the needs of all students. Teachers' marking of students' work was careful, but did not always focus sufficiently on how they could improve. Assessment data in Arabic was not used effectively to support student improvement in the subject.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Not Applicable

The curriculum was good in both the Kindergarten and primary phases. The school had addressed the differing demands of the Montessori and primary curricula by forming a committee to ensure an easy transition experience for the students. The curriculum in Kindergarten did not meet the needs of all students consistently; for example, higher attainers were not always sufficiently challenged and some subject areas and skills were given insufficient focus. The school had recently introduced the new Cambridge Primary Curriculum, but was not using it at an age-appropriate level in all areas. However, they did use real-life examples and extension material to help students to meet or exceed international standards. The school was aware of the need to evaluate the impact of this initiative. There was a need to review the time allocation for Islamic Education and Arabic to ensure compliance with Ministry of Education regulations. The curriculum co-ordinators met regularly but they had not reviewed what the curriculum sufficiently to ensure that it challenged the higher attaining students. The curriculum was enhanced by an extensive after-school activities programme, a wide range of sporting activities, special events, along with trips and visits which supported specific curriculum topics.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Not Applicable

Throughout the school, arrangements to ensure the health and safety of students were outstanding. A comprehensive set of detailed policies were shared with all stakeholders. Well-established procedures and a proactive approach ensured that students were safe in all parts of the school at all times. The school premises were extremely clean. All facilities and equipment were regularly maintained and checked for safety. Effective communication between all staff members ensured that potential hazards were reported and actions taken appropriately and promptly. All exits were secure and well monitored. Fire and emergency evacuation drills were carried out regularly. High levels of adult supervision were maintained in all parts of the school throughout the school day. Useful information about students with medical conditions was shared appropriately with teachers, who understood their responsibilities. Medical processes were excellent; regular checks were carried out and good records were kept. Appropriate policies on student medication were implemented. The school's child protection policy was clear and shared well with teachers, who dealt with matters sensitively. Healthy living was well promoted throughout the school. Students were provided with a good range of healthy food options. Health awareness was systematically promoted in assemblies, activities, in lessons across the curriculum and during snack times. Arrival and dismissal times were well organised and school transportation was safe and well supervised.

The care and support given students were outstanding. Students' behaviour was well managed through the effective use of praise and rewards. The school provided excellent support for children with behavioural difficulties through, for example, the use of a 'friendship group' co-ordinated by the school counsellor. Support for students with special educational needs was highly effective. Students were supported to write their individual learning plan targets in their own words. This helped ensure that they were engaged in their own learning and understood their areas for development. Interventions, such as those provided by co-ordinators were highly effective, particularly in improving literacy.

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	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding

The quality of leadership was good overall. Dedicated and professional senior leaders worked effectively together to communicate a mission and vision that promoted student welfare and better outcomes. Responsibilities were shared well, although the management of Islamic Education and Arabic was less effective than in other subjects. The standards required were well understood by senior leaders. They were working with all teaching staff to ensure that standards were achieved. Good relations among school leaders were in place. There was a good capacity to improve further.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Comprehensive documentation had been prepared and the school's leaders had an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Senior leaders appraised teachers in line with an agreed rubric of teaching skills. This work did not always focus on how successful teachers were in meeting the specific needs of all students in all lessons, especially the high-attaining students. The school had addressed the recommendations from the previous report and had been successful in realising a majority of them. The school lacked rigour in identifying specific success criteria in order to know when an action had been successful.

Partnership with parents and the local community was outstanding. Parents were closely involved in many aspects of their children's learning experiences. The Parents' Association held regular meetings with school leaders and co-ordinated a wide range of events. They supported the school's vision of inclusion, international education and improving individual students' skills and understanding. Communication with parents was effective. There were extensive links with the community that supported students' learning through charity and networking with other school and local businesses. Members of the local community were very supportive of the school.

Governance of the school was good. The board of directors and the School Advisory Council had worked well together to implement a new strategic vision. There were high levels of awareness of the curricular, pedagogical and cultural needs of the school. Governors used a variety of communication methods to listen to stakeholders. They held the staff to account and had priorities for all aspects of the school's development. The governors had not ensured compliance with statutory requirements in the amount of time allocated to Islamic Education and Arabic.

The daily operation of the school was smooth and efficient. Lessons and activities were well organised. All staff members knew and carried out their daily duties effectively. Teachers were appropriately qualified and sufficient in number. Their work was complemented by an effective support specialist and a good number of class assistants. The school facilities were excellent and all specialist areas supported the provision of high quality learning opportunities. All classrooms in both phases of the school were provided with outstanding learning resources and materials in all subject areas.

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	152	24%
	Last year	112	25%
Teachers	16		26%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

About a quarter of the parents responded to the survey, similar to last year's response. A similar proportion of teachers responded to their survey. Most parents expressed overall satisfaction with the quality of education available at the school. Most parents believed that their children were making good progress in English, but there was less confidence about progress in the other key subjects. Parents were broadly positive in their views about the school, believing that their children were safe, happy and well cared for. They indicated that they were involved in the life of the school, but more than half reported that they did not know if inspection had led to improvements at the school. Teachers held very positive views of the school across the range of aspects surveyed, but a few believed that developmental support was weak.

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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