

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Nibras International School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Nibras International School

Location	The Green Community
Type of school	Private
Website	www.nisdubai.ae
Telephone	04-8853330
Address	PO Box 54084, Dubai Investment Park
Principal	Dr. John Black
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	546
Number of Emirati students	15 (3%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> to Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> November 2011

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## The context of the school

Located in the Green Community, Nibras International School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12, aged three to 18 years.

The school follows a US curriculum for most subjects and had adopted the Common Core Standards from the United States for Kindergarten to Grade 6 in mathematics and Kindergarten to Grade 12, in the Language Arts program. At the time of the inspection, there were 546 students from 45 different nations. In all, 284 students spoke Arabic as a first language, 15 of whom were Emirati.

There were 44 full-time teachers and all were suitably qualified for the subjects they taught.

## Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

## How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Nibras International School provided an acceptable quality of education and demonstrated on-going improvement. The school had experienced considerable growth in student population with over 250 new students, mostly recruited for Kindergarten and elementary classes. Twenty-two new teachers had been appointed to the school since the last inspection. The facilities were of a good quality but needed to be better utilised. Attainment and progress were good in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language and science in Kindergarten and elementary phases. Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were unsatisfactory in the middle school. The school did not fully meet the curriculum requirements of the Ministry of Education for Islamic Education and Arabic provision. The behaviour of the students across the school was good, as was the provision for health and safety, and partnerships with parents. In lessons, tasks were not always well suited to the differing needs of students, especially for the significant majority for whom English was an additional language. Students' overall understanding of Islamic issues, along with civic, economic and environmental understanding, was acceptable. Parents valued the open-door policy of the school, its effective two-way communication and their easy access to school leaders and teachers.

The school had made acceptable progress in addressing the majority of the recommendations of the previous inspection report. Newly appointed teachers in key roles were starting to have a positive impact on teaching and learning in the Kindergarten and in providing care and support for students across the school. The roles of subject leaders still needed further development to support the raising of academic outcomes. The governors and senior leaders had identified appropriate priorities for change and had taken steps to involve parents more closely with decision-making. The school had yet to include its teaching staff in this consultative process and introduce greater rigour into self-evaluation, to ensure that priorities were well addressed. The school demonstrated the capacity to improve further.

## Key strengths

- The Kindergarten provided a caring, positive and stimulating environment for learning;
- The effective response of the school leaders, staff and governors in addressing most of the recommendations from the last report;
- Good arrangements to ensure students' health and safety in the school;
- Good links between parents, school and the local community.

## Recommendations

- Improve the progress of those students who speak English as an additional language by accurately identifying their needs and providing the appropriate support;
- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that lessons provide sufficient challenge to the more able students, particularly those in Grades 6 to 12;
- Review and improve the breadth and balance of the curriculum and ensure that it meets the requirements of the Ministry of Education in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Make more regular and effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool to facilitate students' learning;
- Develop the systems for self-evaluation and improvement planning to include more rigorous and systematic processes to monitor academic standards.

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

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

Students' attainment was broadly acceptable with a few instances of good and unsatisfactory attainment. In Islamic Education, attainment was good, as most students had good knowledge of Islamic history and were able to understand and appreciate the values of tolerance and respect for others. Effective listening, speaking and writing skills contributed to the good level of attainment in Arabic as a first language in the elementary phase; however, such skills were not demonstrated by students who studied Arabic as an

additional language, where attainment in the middle school was unsatisfactory. Attainment in English was acceptable across all phases as most students had age-appropriate skills in reading and writing. In the elementary phase most students read regularly and confidently. However, by the high school stage, a majority of students experienced difficulty in analysing texts and lacked confidence using evidence from texts to justify their ideas about a writer's skill and techniques. Across the phases acceptable attainment was achieved in mathematics. Kindergarten students were able to identify patterns correctly and understand number and shape well. The application of mathematical skills was less well developed in other parts of the school, although by high school most students were able to solve problems in calculus with confidence. Students' scientific skills were good in the Kindergarten and elementary classes, where they were able to carry out simple experiments and predict outcomes, but these were acceptable elsewhere. Students studying chemistry were able to undertake complex practical work and analyse results with accuracy.

The progress of students was broadly acceptable but ranged from unsatisfactory to good across different subjects. It was unsatisfactory in Arabic as an additional language because most students struggled to recognise and recall the limited range of simple words and phrases they had been learning for a significant period of time. Consequently, only a few could effectively use key vocabulary. Students with English as an additional language made good progress in English in the Kindergarten but this progress was not sustained in the later stages of the school. Students with special educational needs made slow progress across most key subjects. Students in biology and physics had insufficient practical work to make good progress.

Overall the small number of Emirati students made acceptable to good progress in key subjects. There was no significant difference between their progress and that of other students. They made good progress in Islamic Education and in Arabic and acceptable progress elsewhere.

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

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

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good across the school. Relationships between students and teachers were positive and supportive. Student responsibility was encouraged and senior students took their newly formed school ambassador roles seriously. Most students made healthy eating choices and displayed an awareness of healthy life styles. The absence of extra-curricular activities at the time of the inspection limited the opportunity for physical activity. Attendance and punctuality were acceptable, although arrival at school in the mornings and sometimes to lessons required improvement. Most students had an acceptable knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Islam and almost all students had a good appreciation of the benefits of living in the multi-cultural society of Dubai. Their civic and economic awareness was mostly good, but their involvement in community issues and projects was more limited. The majority of students took good care of the school environment and a few older students had good ideas about how to improve care, as well as to sustain the local environment and its resources.

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

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

The quality of teaching for effective learning was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in all other phases. Teachers knew their subjects well and were mostly confident in how to teach them. Lessons were usually carefully planned although expectations of students were not sufficiently high in too many lessons. Teachers provided tasks suited for relevant grade levels. The level of challenge for more able learners and support for slower learners were not consistently appropriate, especially in the middle and high school phases. Most teachers supplemented textbooks with a range of practical activities and worksheets, but too often tasks were not related well to real life contexts.

Learning was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in all other phases. Students were almost always motivated and enthusiastic learners. They were confident in sharing their learning with others, but were not given frequent enough opportunities to do so. Students undertook very little independent research or enquiry. Students had limited access to information and communications technology in lessons. Lessons did not challenge students to develop their critical and higher order thinking skills. Although teachers often shared the objectives of lessons with students, the rubrics for assessment were not used regularly by teachers to involve students more fully in reviewing their own learning.

The school's assessment of learning was of acceptable quality. The school had extensive assessment data and had developed a tracking system for each student. In Kindergarten, teachers had developed comprehensive systems to record children's achievements across all areas of learning. Targets were communicated regularly to parents of younger students. However, across all phases, assessment and tracking information was not used effectively by all teachers to monitor the progress of students and to identify next steps for learning. School leaders had only a limited range of information regarding broad strengths and weaknesses in attainment. Trends in achievement were not accurately identified. In

elementary, middle and high school, students regularly completed homework or written work in class, but teachers did not always mark students' work to inform them about how to improve. The recent use of diagnostic assessment with students with English as an additional language had helped staff identify those requiring greater levels of support and guidance.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum was acceptable, except in the Kindergarten where it was good. Transition arrangements for students starting at the school, as well as between the phases, ensured that the majority of students were well prepared for the next stages of their education. The curriculum was regularly reviewed to ensure good provision of most subjects and the introduction of Common Core Standards Framework and Advanced Placement courses was a result of such consultation. However, the time allocated to Islamic Education and Arabic did not meet the statutory requirements of the Ministry of Education. The planned curriculum met the learning needs of the majority of students but the least and most able were not well supported; especially the significant majority of students for whom English was an additional language. Cross-curricular links enhanced learning, especially in Kindergarten, but there were fewer opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking across all phases. Links with the wider community required further development. There was some enrichment through a few school events, visits and visitors. A limited range of extra-curricular activities were offered to students including sports; however, there were too few opportunities for inter-school competitive sports or wider activities program of events to meet students' needs and interests.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were good as a result of the school's effective response to the recommendations made by the last inspection. Staff throughout the school took their duty of care seriously. Clear expectations and well-rehearsed routines throughout the day and on the school buses ensured students were safe. Students were well supervised by teachers and support staff during the school day. Fire drills were held regularly, results documented and any issues acted upon; teaching staff were sufficiently aware of the steps to be taken in case of emergencies. The premises were mostly clean and tidy, and all equipment was maintained in an acceptable condition. The medical staff carefully monitored individual health needs and provided advice on a healthy diet and exercise. Medicines and students' records were securely kept and parents informed of any issues affecting their child with appropriate follow-up contact. A healthy life-style programme was provided for the whole school through the curriculum. The school's child protection policy was clear and well documented.

The quality of support for students was acceptable. Relationships between staff and students were respectful and, as a result, behavioural issues were well-managed with policies that effectively communicated expectations to students and parents. The newly appointed counsellor had made an effective start. Careers guidance for older students had become more thorough, with screening processes for high school students to explore different career options. However, there were limited opportunities for students to gain specialist knowledge and experience from the local community. There were only a few links between the school's curriculum and the local businesses and community. Identification and support for students with special educational needs was at an early stage of development across the school. Individual educational plans were used effectively for students with moderate or behavioural needs. However, the support for students with English as an additional language was underdeveloped. Procedures to promote good attendance were systematic but punctuality to lessons, particularly at the beginning of the day and after lunch, required significant improvement.

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

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

Quality of leadership in the school was acceptable. The restructured senior leadership team was competent and through the recent development of policies and procedures, provided clearer direction for a school undergoing significant change. The appointment of key personnel had led to improvements in the Kindergarten and in the provision of support for students with special educational needs. However, roles and responsibilities of the subject co-ordinators required further development to help raise attainment. Students were given limited leadership opportunities. The school had a capacity to improve further.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school had undertaken a review of provision in consultation with parents and the advisory body, which had led to the identification of priorities. Consultation with teaching staff had yet to fully implement the school's aim to promote collegial ownership and support the school in its drive to achieve its mission and promise to parents. Senior staff members carried out lesson observations to share teaching experiences, but the outcomes were not sufficiently rigorous to ensure real change and improve learning. The school had made good progress in addressing most of the recommendations from the previous inspection report.

Parent and school partnership was good. The school had initiated positive steps towards parental involvement which had contributed towards student learning especially in Kindergarten. Many parents gave their time freely on a regular basis to help at school with a range of activities, such as hearing children read and supporting visits. Parents' felt that they were well informed about school's activities and the curriculum; they appreciated the school's drive to increase opportunities for more regular discussion about their child's progress. Written reports to parents were regular but did not always include targets for the student's further development. Local community links had enhanced the experiences of students by broadening their perspectives on Dubai's society; however, links with the wider community and other schools needed further development.

Governance of the school was acceptable. The advisory board represented a number of groups from within the school community and plans were being developed to include a wider cross section of stakeholders. They shared the vision of the school and took an active part in achieving it. For example, they were involved in the appointment of teachers, in school development planning and helping to ensure the school provided a good service and 'listening ear' to parents. However, they did not hold the school sufficiently accountable for academic achievement, nor had they pushed the school closer to achieving its stated mission of producing successful critical thinkers

Staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. Most aspects of the daily routine were effective and efficient. Teaching staff were suitably qualified and mostly well deployed with specialist teachers for most subjects. School facilities were modern, clean and in a good state of repair. A few sections of the school benefited from bright and informative displays of student work. The library had insufficient learning materials to support the curriculum and the ICT suite was not exploited to its full potential to support students' independent learning and research.

## 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	63	26%
	Last year	62	29%
Teachers	11		25%
Students	11		10%

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

About one quarter of parents responded to the survey, a similar rate to last year. About a quarter of the teachers but a smaller proportion of students responded to their surveys. Parents and students indicated satisfaction with the quality of education available at the school. A minority of parents were not satisfied and indicated that their children were not getting the education they expected from the school. Almost all parents believed that progress was good in English, mathematics and science. In contrast, more than a few parents and students indicated that progress was less than good in Arabic. A significant minority of parents felt that there was lack of continuity within the curriculum across phases which sometimes led to unnecessary repetition of work. A few teachers recognised how the school had acted quickly to address recommendations from the last inspection.

## 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)

## 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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