

INSPECTION REPORT

Our Own High School

Report published in February 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Our Own High School

Location	Al Warqa'a
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gemsoo-alwarqa.com
Telephone	04-2800077
Address	P.O. Box 35519,Dubai
Principal	Sanjeev Kumar Jolly
Curriculum	CBSE
Gender of students	Boys
Age / Grades	5-19 / Kindergarten -Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	4688
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	0
Date of the inspection	6th October to 10th October

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The context of the school

Located in Al Warqa'a, Our Own High School is a long-established private school. It provides education from Kindergarten to Grade 12 for Indian expatriate boys and a small number of Pakistani and other nationality groups. At the time of the inspection, there were 4688 students aged five to 19 years on roll. This was a slight drop from the previous year.

The school follows the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum with students completing the CBSE examinations in Grades 10 and 12. A little under one third of the student population was in the primary phase, with a similar number in middle and secondary. Kindergarten boys made up about one percent of the roll. There were 215 teachers, 212 of whom were qualified, and 8 teaching assistants. Ninety one students were identified as having a special educational need and were supported by three specialist staff.

In almost all cases, class sizes from Grade 1 to 12 were between 33 and 39 students.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- The good attainment and progress in Islamic Education and English in primary, middle and secondary phases and in mathematics and science in middle and secondary phases;
- The good teaching and curriculum in the middle and secondary phases;
- The outstanding personal and social development in the middle and secondary phases and community and environmental responsibility in primary phase;
- The outstanding provision for health and safety in all phases;
- The good distributive leadership, self-evaluation, improvement planning, partnership with parents and management of the school.

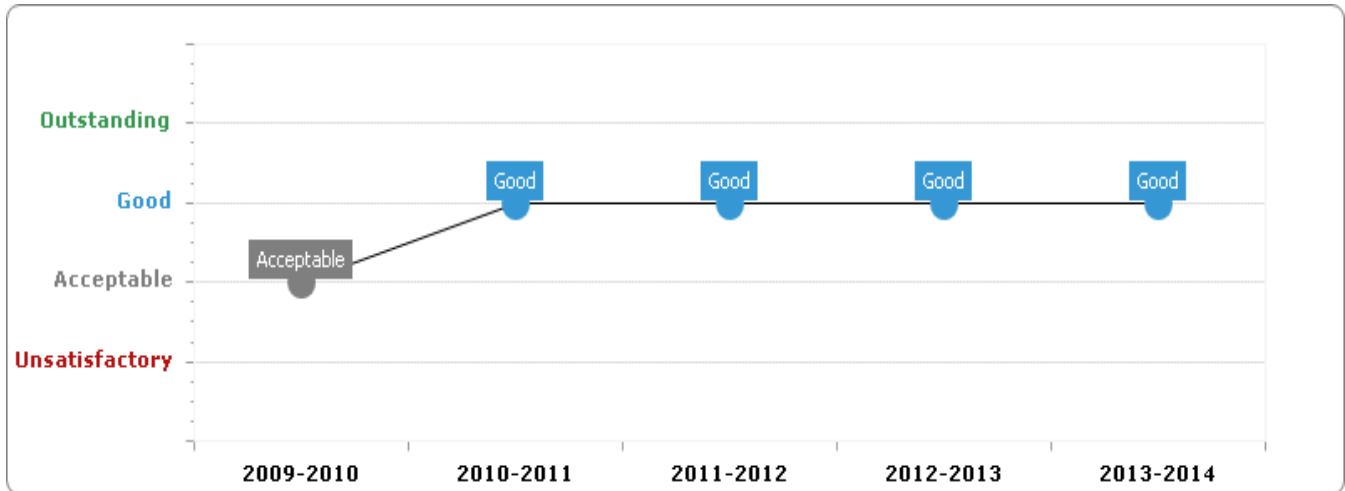
Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language in the primary, middle and secondary phases, particularly in communication skills.
- Improve students' enquiry, research and critical thinking skills in all subjects and phases.
- Develop assessment processes to improve teachers' awareness of each student's level of understanding and learning skill, and use this information in planning to meet the learning needs of students of different abilities.
- Improve curriculum design so that the needs of all groups of students are met.

Progress since the last inspection

- The improvement of provision in the Kindergarten;
- Improvements in Grade 10 and Grade 12 external CBSE examination results;
- Stronger self-evaluation, improvement planning, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning;
- The ambitious aims of the new Principal and Headmistress, including enhanced academic outcomes and leadership opportunities for staff and students.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Kindergarten	Primary	Middle	Secondary
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
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	Good
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

In Islamic Education, attainment was good across the school. Students demonstrated good recitation skills of Qur'anic verses and a well-developed understanding of their meanings. They showed a strong knowledge of Islamic principles and practices. In Arabic as an additional language, listening and speaking skills were acceptable for most students in middle and secondary phases, but less developed for the majority of students in the primary phase where attainment was unsatisfactory. In English, most children in Kindergarten had acceptable levels of listening, writing, speaking and reading skills. In other phases, attainment was good. Most students wrote using a range of genres, although extended creative writing was limited throughout the school. In Kindergarten and primary, attainment in mathematics was acceptable. Students able to use fractions and decimals, algebraic equations, data organisation and problem solving. In the middle and secondary phases, students were confident in handling equations, formulae and functions, and so their attainment was good. In Kindergarten and primary, attainment in science was acceptable. Children in the Kindergarten could listen and respond to questions about their school and family and, in the primary phase, the majority understood basic scientific concepts like solids, liquids and gases. The majority in the middle and secondary phases demonstrated good skills and understanding. External examination results in Grades 10 and 12 had shown improvement.

In Islamic Education, all students made good progress in their understanding of Islamic teachings, practice and historical events. In Arabic as an additional language, the majority of primary students made unsatisfactory progress in developing their speaking skills. Most students in the middle and secondary phases made acceptable progress in improving their grammar skills; they began to apply correct forms of verbs and nouns. In English, Kindergarten children made acceptable progress in writing letters of the alphabet and in recitation. In other phases, students increasingly improved their vocabulary and acquired good linguistic skills. In mathematics, children in the Kindergarten built gradually and acceptably upon their understanding of numbers and shapes. In primary, students could carry out simple mathematical calculations, and use these developing skills to solve simple number problems, making acceptable progress. In upper middle and secondary phases, students made good progress. In science, the majority of Kindergarten children made acceptable progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of their surroundings. In the remainder of the school and by the end of Grade 5, most were able to understand basic scientific concepts. Progress was good in upper middle and senior phases in knowledge acquisition but less so in reasoning and application.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were acceptable in the Kindergarten and primary, and good in middle and secondary. Students enjoyed their learning and, in the middle and secondary phases, showed the capacity to take responsibility for their own learning. However, in the Kindergarten and primary phases where learning was more strongly teacher directed, they tended to be more passive. Students were well motivated and participated eagerly in lessons. The more able senior students were reflective and a few asked perceptive questions based on their own thinking and imagination. Independent learning was better developed in the middle and secondary phases, where they combined strong interaction and collaborative learning to achieve common goals. Senior students made clear connections with other learning and related these well to the real world, but this was limited in lower phases. When given an opportunity, students were proactive in finding things out for themselves but there was limited use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning. In all phases, there were too few opportunities for critical thinking and problem solving.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Personal responsibility was good in the Kindergarten and primary phase, and outstanding in the middle and secondary phases. Throughout the school, students showed positive and responsible attitudes and behaviour. They had respectful relationships with other students and with staff. In the Kindergarten and primary phase, children and students learned how to become members of a community and about the importance of healthy lifestyles. They were exposed to good role models and this helped them to understand their roles and responsibilities better. In the middle and secondary phases, students developed strong leadership qualities. Head Boys, Prefects, and Mentors were self-disciplined and strove for excellence. Their commitment to their peers, the school and the world community was reflected in the multifarious projects and schemes with which they were involved. Attendance was good in all phases.

In Kindergarten, most children knew some Islamic features and the number of Emirates in the UAE. In other phases, students knew how Islam influenced life in Dubai and were aware of its manifestations. Clear messages of respect for Islam and Muslims prevailed in assemblies and lessons. In the primary phase, students demonstrated a good understanding of other cultures through group performances and displays. Students in the middle and secondary phases demonstrated the Islamic values of collaboration and helping others. They displayed a strong appreciation of UAE traditions while being proud of their own cultures.

The middle and secondary students sustained a strong commitment to the school community and the environment and were purposefully and frequently involved in supporting it. The raising of funds through recycling clothes and cans, beach cleaning and a sale of textbooks were a few of many examples. School assemblies regularly featured community-based themes. The students had a significant impact on the school's community spirit and development. Primary students showed strong initiative in raising their involvement through the environmental stewardship scheme, the campus clean up scheme and recycling. In the Kindergarten, children were not involved in similar, age-appropriate activity, although they developed a caring and practical approach to the school environment.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable in the Kindergarten and primary, and good in middle and secondary. Most teachers had good subject knowledge but their understanding of how students learn was underdeveloped, particularly in the lower phases. Teaching in key subjects in Kindergarten and primary phases did not challenge students sufficiently. Across all phases, lesson planning was variable and often did not consistently take into account students' prior knowledge. As a result, the learning needs of the higher and lower attaining students were not always sufficiently met. This was especially true in the lower phases, where learning objectives were not sufficiently well defined to allow students of different abilities to reach their potential. This limited the development of subject-specific skills and understanding. Teacher-student interactions in lower phases were mostly limited to single, closed questions and short one or two word answers. In senior phases, there were more and better opportunities for dialogue; students asked questions of the teacher and of each other. However, too few teachers promoted critical and independent thinking. The use of ICT to promote learning was limited across the school.

The school had made significant efforts to collect student and class performance information, but had not yet organised or analysed it to inform the improvement of teaching and learning. The school had begun to track the progress of individual students. This information was not yet used effectively enough when planning to develop activities that were stimulating, challenging and appropriately matched to the various learning needs within each class. Only a few teachers held reviews of learning as a part of each lesson. This limited their understanding of their students' strengths and weaknesses. Regular testing of a formative and summative nature occurred. Most students' books were marked regularly with ticks and short comments of praise, but did not typically include guidance on how work might be improved.

[View judgments](#)

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

The curriculum quality was acceptable in the Kindergarten and primary, and good in the middle and secondary phases. The overall curriculum had a clear rationale. The Kindergarten curriculum had acceptable breadth, continuity, coherence and progression to meet the needs of early childhood learners. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However, the provision was not sufficiently integrated or balanced enough to promote very effective learning. For example, there were limited opportunities for exploration and play. The school successfully adapted the CBSE curriculum in other phases and provided sufficient enrichment beyond the curriculum in higher phases. In Islamic Education, it provided age-appropriate content but there was insufficient provision for enquiry and critical thinking especially in the primary and middle phases. The Arabic curriculum had acceptable enrichment, but lacked a clear sequence. The progression and balance were uneven in science particularly in the primary phase. Periodic reviews across the school's provision occurred and significant modifications particularly in the Kindergarten had been implemented. Good examples of cross-curricular links were evident in the middle and secondary phases but were not as prominent in the primary phase.

The school's modification of its curriculum to match students' needs was acceptable. Teachers had identified students with special educational needs, including the gifted and talented. The special needs staff were supporting teachers when devising individual educational plans. However, these plans were not yet in place for all students with special educational needs, and those that were available were not sufficiently accessible to subject teachers. This reduced the opportunity to match learning outcomes to specific learning needs. Students from Grades 1 to 10 were offered some choices in a second language. Non-Muslim students could also choose to study Values Education. Students in Grade 11 and 12 had the choice of science or commerce strands. There was adequate guidance in their choices which supported their next steps in their education or working life.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Outstanding arrangements were made to ensure the health and safety of all students. All parts of the facility were maintained to a high standard to provide a very safe, secure and hygienic learning environment. Students were supervised well at all times in the school day including on school transport. There were efficient and effective arrangements for the delivery and collection of students on school buses. The school buildings and equipment were presented well; they were in excellent condition and were extremely clean. Detailed records were maintained of all aspects of the safety of students including the regular checks of equipment and fire precaution procedures. The medical staff provided an excellent lead in the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and this message was consistently reinforced throughout the school. All staff and students were aware of the child protection policy.

The quality of support was good in all phases. Relationships between staff and students were based on mutual respect and were a strong feature of the school. There were good systems to promote the regular and prompt attendance in all phases. Students with special educational needs were admitted to the school and there were acceptable and gradually improving procedures to identify their needs but the support provided for these students in class was inconsistent. Some were supported well by subject teachers who planned tasks, but in other classes they received little support and, as a result, were only able to make limited progress. Staff knew students well and gave a high priority to their well-being. A careful record was kept of the personal development of all students by class teachers. Students were confident to seek help and advice when needed for a range of personal matters as well as careers guidance.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was good. The new and enthusiastic leadership team had developed a clear shared vision, based upon holistic student development and academic excellence. They projected a confidence and maturity and were attuned to the short and long term needs of the school. They were building a growing team of middle managers who had clear, shared responsibilities. These leaders led increasingly effective teams across the school. Relationships were professional and communication was strong and effective. There was an active policy to develop the capacity of staff and students at all levels of the school. The leaders exhibited ample capacity to continue the strategic development of the school.

Increasingly comprehensive and detailed procedures led to good self-evaluation. All stakeholders were involved in the process led by the Principal and his senior colleagues. Some analysis of data occurred; however, this was insufficiently rigorous to pinpoint specific areas for development. Nevertheless, self-evaluation was used to inform and produce an annual improvement plan. This represented a good balance

of personal, professional, pedagogical and material aspects, but was not yet sufficiently specific in its expected outcomes. Good systems of classroom monitoring provided both an overview of classroom practice and good detail to inform professional development. Overall, the school had made sufficient progress in addressing recommendations of the previous report.

Partnerships with parents were good. The parents were highly supportive of the school and its senior management. They expressed satisfaction with the curriculum and the regular and clear communication between school and themselves. There was an active Parents Advisory Council which met monthly. The school's reporting to parents was regular, informative and comprehensive. It included two diagnostic, four formative and two summative reports. Parents were less happy about the inaction of the governors in support of their request for upgraded sporting facilities, or their lack of an effective voice. Links with the community were well established and included visits to cultural and sporting events as well as competitions which enhanced learning opportunities.

The governing body had a generally positive influence and assisted with school improvement, but had minimal representation from stakeholders. It is nevertheless acceptable. Parents did not have an effective voice and there was no broad academic representation. The Board sought parents' views via surveys and through the Parents Advisory Council and had a broad but basic knowledge of the school. It held the school to account. It had not ensured a reduction in the overly large class sizes or the upgrade of outdoor sporting facilities.

The day-to-day operations of the school, such as transport management, were effectively and efficiently undertaken. Almost all staff were appropriately qualified and support staff were effectively deployed. The premises were of a high quality and extremely well maintained. The sporting facilities were a weak area of provision. Throughout the school in classrooms and corridors, there were excellent displays of students' work. The libraries were functional and well stocked with age-appropriate fiction and non-fiction. However, the junior library was not an attractive place to work or study. Class sizes were large across the school. Resources for learning were insufficient to meet learning needs, particularly in the junior school.

[View judgements](#)

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

Progress for students with special educational needs throughout the school was acceptable in Islamic Studies, English, mathematics and science but unsatisfactory in Arabic due to lack of support and low level, purposeless worksheets. In other key subjects, class buddies worked alongside and helped the students understand what they needed to do. There was scope for staff development in understanding students' needs in order to develop detailed individual education plans with achievable learning steps. The school recognised its gifted students. Parents were involved at all stages through the referral system. Experts delivered information to parents related to particular issues. Meetings were arranged between teachers, counsellors and parents to discuss the student's progress. In lessons, there was some differentiation in planning. However, there was a lack of definition of each student's learning needs. Progress was monitored through tests in all key subjects on a termly basis. This information was not analysed sufficiently to ensure detailed learning targets were set. The school had effective admission and special needs policies that ensured all students were accepted. The policy covered all aspects of provision. Guidelines for parents were very clear. Leaders had expertise and had put systems in place. They had trained some teachers. Leaders had not completed all individual educational plans and had not guided subject teachers sufficiently as to how modifications could be made to address the needs of individual students. The school was fully inclusive and students took part in all aspects of the curriculum.

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 judgments. 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	1488	34%
	Last year	1750	41%
Teachers	173		80%
Students	856		85%

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

The following statements were based on the survey response at the time of the inspection. The above response figures are the most up-to-date and accurate available prior to publication.

A minority of parents responded to this year's survey, with slightly fewer responding compared with last year. Most teachers and most senior students responded to their surveys. Parents showed a high level of satisfaction with the quality of education provided by the school. Almost all felt their child enjoyed school and were safe while at school. Most felt that students made good progress in English, mathematics and science, and a majority felt that progress was good in Arabic as an additional language. A majority felt that the school dealt well with bullying. Parents and students were unhappy that the few sporting facilities had not been upgraded. Most senior students were satisfied with the quality of provision of their education. Almost all felt that they were making good progress in English, but fewer were satisfied with the provision of mathematics and science. A few students complained about bullying. All teachers were supportive of all aspects of 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.

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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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