

INSPECTION REPORT

Apple International School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Apple International School

Location	Al Qusais
Type of school	Private
Website	www.apple.sch.ae
Telephone	04 2638989
Address	PO Box 33963, Qusais 1, Dubai
Principal	Mrs. Hyacinth John Pulickan
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-13 / Kindergarten to Grade 8
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2,025
Number of Emirati students	34 (2%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 12th to Thursday 15th 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?	12
What happens next?	13
How to contact us	13
Our work with schools	14

The context of the school

Apple International School is situated in Al Qusais. The school had opened in September 1994. At the time of the inspection, the school had a roll of 2,025 students, aged from three to 13 years.

The school followed an adapted version of the English National Curriculum.

There were 85 full-time teachers, including the Principal and the senior leadership team. There were no part-time teachers. Most teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. They were supported by 27 teaching assistants and 68 other staff. Students were grouped into 74 classes. There were 28 classes at Foundation Stage, declining to two at Grade 8. Thirty four students were Emirati, approximately two per cent of the total. At the time of the inspection, 56 members of staff were in, or had just completed, their first year in the school.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Unsatisfactory

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Apple International School provided an unsatisfactory quality of education. It had only a few good features throughout. Attainment and progress were unsatisfactory in Arabic as first language in the primary stage and in Arabic as an additional language across all stages. There had been an improvement in science in primary and secondary, where attainment and progress were acceptable. The quality of teaching and learning was unsatisfactory in primary. The curriculum was unsatisfactory at Foundation Stage. Most aspects of leadership were unsatisfactory.

The school had made limited progress in addressing the recommendations made in the previous inspection report. There had been no improvement in attainment and progress, apart from science. Indeed, there had been a noticeable deterioration in Arabic. The school had taken appropriate steps to ensure safer arrival and departure of students, but considerable problems remained, largely through the inconsiderate manoeuvring of cars. The school had attempted to meet the recommendation on class size by introducing a shift system for children at Foundation Stage. Elsewhere, class sizes had not been reduced to any significant degree, and certainly there had been no improvement in teaching and learning. There had been little progress in meeting other recommendations from the last inspection.

Key strengths

- Students' knowledge of Islam and local traditions;
- Students' civic and economic understanding;
- Positive relationships with parents and the local community.

Recommendations

- Raise standards in Arabic by ensuring the development and practice of all four language skills equally and increasing teaching time to also ensure full compliance;
- Develop a better understanding of planning for differentiation and the practical aspects of using differentiated activities in class;
- Develop assessment procedures which can be used by teachers to inform planning and improve teaching and learning;
- Expand the curriculum at Foundation Stage to include exploration, independent learning, greater access to books and creativity;
- Involving governors, ensure that leaders focus appropriately on improving teaching and learning.

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

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

Attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable across the school. The majority of students had appropriate knowledge and understanding of Islamic concepts and the majority were able to apply them in their daily lives. Attainment in Arabic as a first language was unsatisfactory in primary and acceptable in secondary. The four linguistic skills were not well developed. Attainment and progress in Arabic as a second language was unsatisfactory. Most students' listening skills were poorly developed. Reading and speaking were

weak and writing was very weak throughout each phase. Attainment in English, mathematics and science at all stages was acceptable. In mathematics, in the Foundation Stage, children gained appropriate knowledge of number and shape. By Grade 8, they had developed an understanding of algebra. In science, children in Foundation Stage used their senses to observe and explain the world around them. By secondary, students had deepened their understanding of concepts and were improving their skills in scientific investigation.

Progress in Islamic Education was acceptable, though stronger in secondary. In Arabic, students did not make enough progress against learning objectives. Excessive use of English by teachers hindered the development of their language skills in this subject. Progress was acceptable in English, mathematics and science. In English, students in the Foundation Stage and primary made minimally acceptable progress. In secondary, students were extending their speaking skills, understanding what they read and developing their written work. Progress was acceptable in mathematics, but hindered for the more able by lack of challenge. There was inconsistent progress in science across all phases. Most students with special educational needs in Foundation Stage were supported and were making adequate progress, but in other classes students with special educational needs were making less progress than their peers.

Emirati students' attainment and progress were acceptable in Islamic Education, Arabic and English. It was unsatisfactory in mathematics and science. Emiratis made up a large number of students identified by the school as having special educational needs.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Attitudes and behaviour	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good

Attitudes and behaviour were acceptable across the school. A few students' lack of discipline adversely affected the smooth running of some classes. Otherwise, relationships were generally positive. Most students were aware of healthy food options. Attendance had been good, but there was a high absence rate in some classes during the inspection. Students' understanding of Islam and appreciation of local tradition and culture was good across the school. Students had a clear understanding of Islamic values and appreciated their impact. They described Islam's promotion of appropriate behaviour and respect for the elderly. Children in the Foundation Stage displayed age-appropriate knowledge of Islam. Students in the primary and secondary stages appreciated local history, traditions and culture; they were also able to describe local family practices. Civic, economic and environmental understanding was good in all phases. Students displayed a clear understanding of their responsibilities as citizens. They had participated in planting trees around the school and they understood how Dubai had developed and could name its major land marks. Most students also understood major environmental issues and stressed the need to conserve resources locally and globally.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable
Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and in secondary, but unsatisfactory in primary. In a few lessons, where good practice was observed, teachers had high expectations of all students. They planned interesting lessons using a good range of strategies and resources which encouraged student interaction. They motivated and inspired students and enabled them, through effective questioning, to think critically. However, in too many lessons, teachers did not have secure subject knowledge and had little understanding of how students learn. They did not make best use of resources, including information and communications technology (ICT), to enhance learning. Most importantly, teachers' expectations of what students could achieve, particularly in the lower primary classes, were not sufficiently high. In these lessons students rarely made better than acceptable progress. The quality of teaching in French was too variable. History and geography lessons were effectively taught, though almost entirely teacher directed.

Students' learning was acceptable in the Foundation Stage and secondary, and unsatisfactory in primary. Most students were keen to learn. They listened well and enjoyed sharing ideas and supporting their fellow students when given the opportunity. In too many lessons, however, their enthusiasm was less apparent, especially when expectations for what they could achieve were low. Most were at the early stages of developing critical and higher order thinking skills. They had few opportunities for sustained independent and investigative work in lessons. They had some research topics, however, for homework. Although learning objectives were often shared, students were not always involved in reviewing their own learning. Consequently, most did not have a clear idea about how to improve their work and their next steps for learning.

Assessment was unsatisfactory across all three phases. At Foundation Stage, teachers used diagnostic assessment and maintained individual portfolios for children. However, the criteria used in assessments were worded in terms of expectations for the whole class, not the individual child. In the upper phases, unit assessments and summative examinations were used to gather information on student attainment. This substantial assessment data did not inform lesson planning, nor ensure that tasks and activities met the needs of all students. In lessons, questioning used by teachers was often narrowly focused on factual recall and did not effectively assess and develop student understanding. Classwork was marked regularly, but insufficient feedback was provided for students on how they could improve further. Plans were in place to develop student self-assessment and target setting, but had yet to be fully implemented. The school did not use external examinations to benchmark attainment reliably against international standards.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum was unsatisfactory at Foundation Stage and acceptable in other phases. The early years curriculum focused strongly on language and numeracy which was directed and controlled by teachers. It did not provide sufficient opportunities to promote the important developmental areas of exploration, initiative, creativity and play. Children had insufficient access to books and materials and to activities in the free-flow area. Progression and continuity in key subjects in the other phases was enhanced by the school's links to the English National Curriculum. Teachers reviewed the curriculum annually. They had made significant improvement in the science curriculum. However, there was insufficient scope within planning to meet the needs of all students across the ability range. With the encouragement of subject leaders, in primary and secondary, teachers successfully used cross-curricular links to develop a more cohesive learning experience for students. The curriculum included a wide-ranging programme of activities, ranging across academic, sporting and creative options. The school was not compliant in its time allocation for the teaching of Arabic.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Health and safety were acceptable in all phases. Arrangements to ensure that students were kept safe were effective and thorough. Good communication between bus drivers, parents and the school ensured the safe delivery and pick-up of students, both of which were efficiently organised. However, the lack of control of the arrangements for arrival in the morning and collecting students by car in the afternoon, presented hazards for children and adults. The premises and facilities were maintained to an acceptable standard. There were regular fire drills and evacuation practice. However, the over-crowded and cramped classrooms meant that rapid evacuation of the school was extremely difficult, particularly for the youngest children. Risk assessments were regularly carried out. Record-keeping was comprehensive and teachers were appropriately informed of student medical matters. The school promoted healthy living and checked that children were provided with healthy food. Teachers encouraged students to exercise and keep fit. Most teachers were aware of the school's child protection policy.

Support for students was acceptable throughout the school. Students and teachers had a good rapport. Although many teachers were sensitive to students' needs, the management of behaviour across the school was inconsistent. Action plans and counselling for students with serious behaviour problems were implemented independently. The counsellor provided valuable individual guidance and support and managed the diagnostic referral system. Whilst the school had implemented individual education plans they were not standardised or regularly updated. Students with special educational needs were not adequately supported in the classroom. The system for promoting better attendance was not effectively managed.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

Leadership was unsatisfactory. The principal's vision for the school was limited although the directors expressed a laudable desire for the pursuit of excellence. Neither vision was well appreciated by the staff of the school. Job descriptions for middle managers were detailed, but allowed for little involvement in strategic planning.

Self-evaluation was unsatisfactory. Analysis of data on international comparisons was erroneous. These errors had gone unnoticed. The school's self-evaluation report was inaccurate and over-optimistic in almost all cases. It reflected an imperfect knowledge of the school. The result was a self-congratulatory document which had little impact on teaching and learning. The school had made limited progress in addressing the recommendations of the previous report.

Partnerships with parents and the local community were good. The school had kept parents well informed. A few parents assisted with school visits and with early reading in Foundation Stage. The school had taken innovative steps to involve fathers more fully. However, parents were not sure about the school's priorities or about future direction, and did not have opportunities to participate in decision-making. The school's communications with parents, links with other schools and with the local community were good.

Governance was unsatisfactory. The governing body included representatives from parents and the local community, but the governors did not have a sufficiently extensive avenue of communication with parents. The board had not been effective in ensuring that the school complied with regulations over time allocation for the teaching of Arabic, nor on student occupancy of classroom space. The result was that all class sizes at every stage were in excess of the statutory number, sometimes excessively so.

Management was unsatisfactory. Some aspects of management which impinged on the smooth running of the school were deficient. Senior managers had not ensured consistent progress across key subjects, nor

had they secured high quality teaching. Although the school appeared to operate efficiently, it did so at a superficial level. The principal did not have an overview of timetabling. Timetables were imbalanced and without any rationale. Approximately 30 per cent of teachers did not have appropriate teacher training. A few had such inadequate subject knowledge that they could not deliver what they professed to teach. Many aspects of accommodation were poor. Learning resources, including books and ICT, were limited throughout.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students (where applicable) 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	391	26%
	Last year	696	45%
Teachers	44		40%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

A significant minority of parents responded to the survey, fewer than last year. The minority of teachers who responded to their survey held positive views of the school. Most parents expressed satisfaction with the overall quality of education provided by the school, but a few were not satisfied. Most parents agreed that their children were making good progress in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science; however, only a half thought it was good in Arabic as a first or additional language. Most parents reported that their child were safe and happy at school. A majority thought that the range of clubs and activities provided was good, but about a fifth of the parents disagreed. A few parents believed that the homework given to their children was unsuitable. Parents generally viewed communication with the school as good, but a few thought that school leaders did not listen to them.

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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