



National Agenda



Early years



Special educational needs and disabilities



Innovation

## Inspection Report 2015-2016

Cambridge International School

Curriculum: UK

Overall rating: Good

[Read more about the school](#)



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“Don't look behind to see who is following you, but look forward to be ahead”



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

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## School information

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p><b>General information</b></p>         | <p><b>Location</b></p> <p><b>Type of school</b></p> <p><b>Opening year of school</b></p> <p><b>Website</b></p> <p><b>Telephone</b></p> <p><b>Address</b></p> <p><b>Principal</b></p> <p><b>Language of instruction</b></p> <p><b>Inspection dates</b></p>  | <p>Al Garhoud</p> <p>Private</p> <p>1983</p> <p>www.gemscis-dubai.com</p> <p>04-2824646</p> <p>PO Box 60835, Dubai, United Arab Emirates</p> <p>Craig Dennis Lamshed</p> <p>English</p> <p>23 to 26 November 2015</p> |
| <p><b>Students</b></p>                   | <p><b>Gender of students</b></p> <p><b>Age range</b></p> <p><b>Grades or year groups</b></p> <p><b>Number of students on roll</b></p> <p><b>Number of children in pre-kindergarten</b></p> <p><b>Number of Emirati students</b></p> <p><b>Number of students with SEND</b></p> <p><b>Largest nationality group of students</b></p> | <p>Boys and girls</p> <p>3-18</p> <p>Foundation Stage 1 to Year 13</p> <p>2,520</p> <p>124</p> <p>36</p> <p>130</p> <p>Indian</p>   |
| <p><b>Teachers / Support staff</b></p>  | <p><b>Number of teachers</b></p> <p><b>Largest nationality group of teachers</b></p> <p><b>Number of teaching assistants</b></p> <p><b>Teacher-student ratio</b></p> <p><b>Number of guidance counsellors</b></p> <p><b>Teacher turnover</b></p>   | <p>132</p> <p>Indian</p> <p>15</p> <p>19</p> <p>1</p> <p>31%</p>  |
| <p><b>Curriculum</b></p>               | <p><b>Educational permit / Licence</b></p> <p><b>Main curriculum</b></p> <p><b>External tests and examinations</b></p> <p><b>Accreditation</b></p> <p><b>National Agenda benchmark tests</b></p>   | <p>UK</p> <p>UK</p> <p>IGSCE, IGCE, AS, A, CAT4, GL</p> <p>None</p> <p>GL Assessments</p>   |

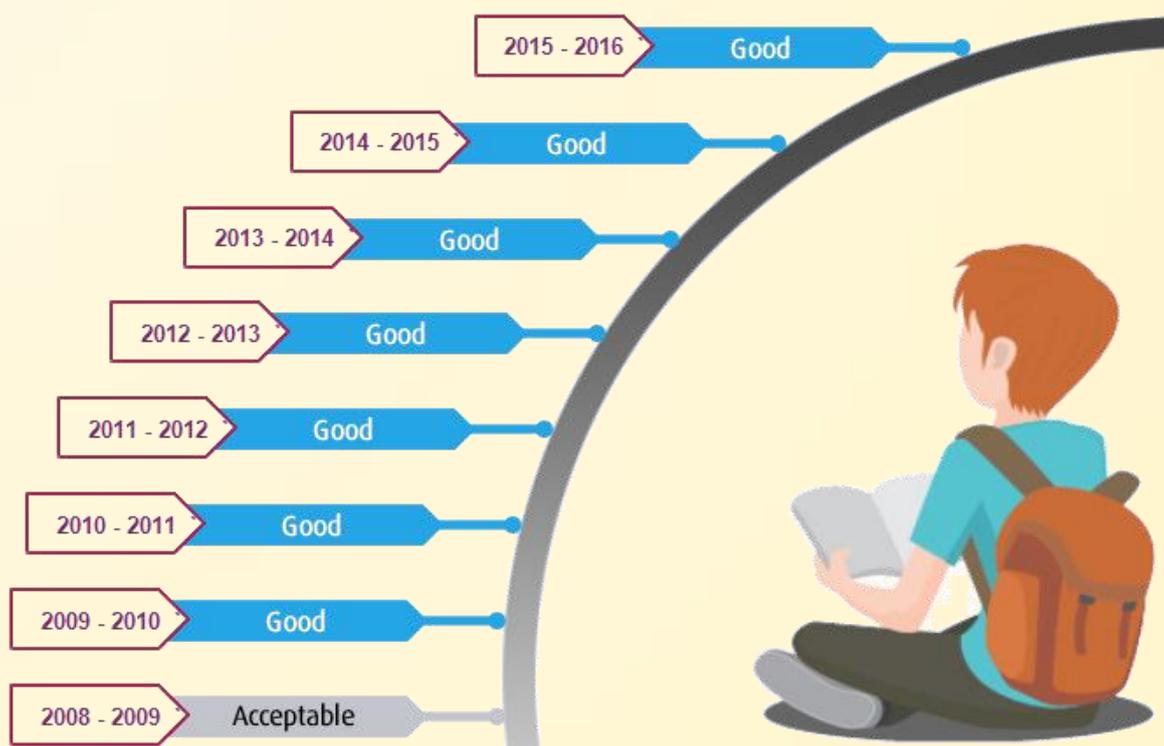


## Summary for parents and the community

**Cambridge International School** was inspected by DSIB from 23 to 26 November 2015. The overall quality of education provided by the school was found to be **good**.

In order to judge the overall quality of education provided by the school, inspectors considered six key standards of performance. Inspectors looked at children's attainment and progress in key subjects, their learning skills and their personal and social development. They judged how effective teaching and the assessment of learning were across the school. Inspectors considered how well the school's curriculum, including activities inside and outside classrooms, met the educational needs of all children. They judged how well the school protected and supported children. In addition inspectors judged the effectiveness of leadership and governance, including management, staffing, facilities and resources.

The inspection judgements were drawn from evidence gathered by the inspection team, including observing children learning in lessons, looking at their work, talking with children, meetings with the staff, parents and governors, and reviewing the parents', teachers' and senior students' surveys.





### How well did the school perform overall?

Overall, Cambridge International School provided a **good** quality of education for its students.

- Students' attainment and progress were strongest in the Foundation Stage, the secondary and post-16 phases. Standards in English, mathematics and science, in these parts of the school, were higher than in Arabic or Islamic education. The quality of teaching and the development of students' learning skills followed the same pattern. In the Foundation Stage, where teaching was very good, children's learning was also very good. Critical thinking, enquiry and research skills improved as students progressed through school and were strongest for the older students.
- The behaviour and attitude of nearly all students across the school were outstanding. However, in a few primary classes, where teachers were not skilled at managing behaviour effectively, boys did not show sufficient self-discipline. Most students had an in-depth, age appropriate understanding of Islam and Emirati heritage. They had a strong awareness of environmental issues and took on many roles of responsibility and leadership within their community.
- The quality of teachers' planning had been successfully improved with the support of learning coaches. The ability of teachers to match tasks to different groups of students was strongest in the Foundation Stage and in English, mathematics and science in the secondary and post-16 phases. The school had established reliable systems to analyse data and students in the post-16 phase had developed skills to critically assess their own learning.
- In the Foundation Stage, the integrated curriculum enabled children to make meaningful connections in their learning. Secondary students were offered a wide range of options, including Arabic. In the post-16 phase, the choice of courses enabled students to choose pathways suited to their abilities and learning styles. The school provided an excellent range of opportunities for enterprise and community service.
- There were detailed health and safety policies in place, accompanied by strong procedures, which ensured the well-being of students. The premises and facilities were in good order and were well maintained. However, the cramped conditions in classrooms, especially in the primary phase, impeded learning. The quality of care and support was good in the lower phases and outstanding in the higher phases. Excellent guidance was provided on higher education and careers.
- Most leaders in the school were highly effective. They were well aware of the school's needs and targeted their improvement. However, leaders had more success with some improvements, for example the development of the Foundation Stage, than with other long-standing weaknesses. Links with parents were excellent, but governance had not fulfilled all their responsibilities this year. Management of the school was effective and teachers were well qualified.



### What did the school do well?

- Students, in most phases, took their personal responsibilities very conscientiously. Nearly all students were involved in their communities to a large extent, had strong work ethics and engaged in initiatives that supported sustainability.
- The high quality of teaching, the development of learning skills, assessment and curriculum design modification had led to very good progress for students in the Foundation Stage, in all the core areas of the curriculum.
- Students in the post-16 phase continued to attain and progress in English at the highest levels.
- The school's partnership with parents remained an excellent example of how best to extend students' learning into the home.
- The very high standards of safety, security and care, particularly in the higher phases, enabled students to focus on their learning in school.



### What does the school need to do next?

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in Islamic education by:
  - applying the subject to real life
  - increasing opportunities for students to be more active in their learning.
- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in Arabic to meet the needs of all students by improving:
  - the fluency of students' speaking and writing skills
  - teachers' regular use of assessments to inform planning.
- Strengthen leadership in order to:
  - measurably improve teaching and learning in the primary phase
  - support teachers in modifying learning activities to meet students' special needs.
- The governing body must exercise its role of holding senior leaders to account, in relation to the progress the school is making on the DSIB recommendations and its responsibility of reducing the overcrowding in classrooms.



### How well did the school provide for students with special educational needs and disabilities?

- The school was rightly proud of its highly inclusive ethos and welcomed students with a wide range of difficulties including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), but the school did not regularly review the effectiveness of the support it gave to students with SEND.
- Staff was skilled in using a range of assessment tools to identify students with SEND when they joined the school. The school had addressed the recommendation from the last report on the early identification of Foundation Stage children with SEND.
- The school kept parents well informed of their children's achievements and parents valued the support and guidance given by the achievement centre staff.
- Specialist staff were skillful at planning activities in the achievement centre to meet students' individual needs. The quality of support for SEND in classrooms had improved since the last inspection. However, some teachers, particularly in the primary phase, still lacked the ability to ensure activities were challenging and helped students achieve their targets.
- Overall, students with SEND made progress in line with their peers and their support plans. They made the best progress when they worked individually or in small groups with specialist staff.

## National Agenda Parameter



In 2014, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of UAE, and Ruler of Dubai, launched the UAE National Agenda 2021, with education being a prime focus. The National Agenda includes two major objectives developed with the intent of placing the UAE among the most successful countries that provide world-class education. By 2021, it is expected that the UAE will feature in the top twenty countries in the 'Programme for International Student Assessment' (PISA) test and in the top fifteen countries in the 'Trends in Mathematics and Science Studies' (TIMSS) test.

In response to this, each participating school was issued a report on their students' performance in these international assessments and in addition, they were provided with clear targets for improving their performance. This academic year, KHDA introduced the National Agenda Parameter, which is a method for measuring and monitoring schools' progress towards achieving their individual National Agenda targets through the use of external benchmarking assessments.

### Main points:

- The school partially met the registration requirements of the National Agenda Parameter. No attainment data from the National Agenda Parameter was available at this stage to make a judgement on the progress towards meeting the National Agenda targets.
- The school had promoted knowledge and understanding about the National Agenda and National Agenda targets well to students, teachers, senior leaders and governors. It was at the early stages of promoting it to parents.
- The school had reviewed its curriculum in light of international tests. In English, there had been a sustained focus on reading comprehension. The mathematics curriculum had a strong emphasis on mental arithmetic, throughout the school as well as on algebraic skills, especially in secondary and post-16 phases. The science curriculum had been modified to further improve investigational processes.
- In English, there had been a strong focus on developing teachers' questioning skills through the use of learning coaches and feedback from lesson observation. Teaching had been modified in science and mathematics in the secondary and post-16 phases to improve students' independent thinking, investigation and reasoning skills.
- Opportunities for students to research were restricted through the lack of learning technology resources. The school was at an early stage of enabling students to bring their own devices. Recent investment had improved access to books that would support students in developing their critical thinking skills.

## Innovation in education

The *UAE Vision 2021* sets out the National Agenda for the UAE to be among the most innovative nations in the world. The National Innovation Strategy sets the context for 'innovation' and 'innovative leadership'. It provides a basis for evaluating public and private schools in order to deliver a world-class education for all children in the UAE.

Innovation is driven by a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. It is based on curiosity, the willingness to take risks, to experiment and to test assumptions as well as questioning and challenging the status quo. Being innovative is about looking beyond what we currently do well, identifying the great ideas of tomorrow and putting them into practice.



### Promoting a culture of innovation:

- The leadership team, teachers and senior students collaboratively promoted innovation. The school had identified capacity within its staff and was seeking to support it through recruitment of an innovation and curriculum leader. There were many activities and initiatives conducted to promote innovation, such as those in 'Innovation Week', but leaders had yet to ensure that these were purposeful across the school through systematic and strategic planning. The school's specialist facilities and infrastructure did not routinely provide students and teachers with an environment capable of incubating innovation. School leaders and staff ensured initiatives and projects enriched the curriculum and extended students' experiences and innovative skills, particularly in the post-16 phase.

### Overall school performance

Good

#### 1. Students' achievement

|  |                   | Foundation Stage | Primary      | Secondary   | Post-16        |
|--|-------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| <b>Islamic education</b><br>                  | <b>Attainment</b> | Not applicable   | Acceptable   | Acceptable  | Acceptable     |
|  | <b>Progress</b>   | Not applicable   | Acceptable   | Acceptable  | Acceptable     |
| <b>Arabic as a first language</b><br>         | <b>Attainment</b> | Not applicable   | Acceptable ↓ | Acceptable  | Acceptable     |
|  | <b>Progress</b>   | Not applicable   | Acceptable ↓ | Acceptable  | Acceptable     |
| <b>Arabic as an additional language</b><br> | <b>Attainment</b> | Not applicable   | Acceptable   | Acceptable  | Not applicable |
|  | <b>Progress</b>   | Not applicable   | Acceptable   | Acceptable  | Not applicable |
| <b>English</b><br>                          | <b>Attainment</b> | Good             | Acceptable   | Very good ↓ | Outstanding    |
|  | <b>Progress</b>   | Very good ↑      | Acceptable   | Very good ↓ | Outstanding    |
| <b>Mathematics</b><br>                      | <b>Attainment</b> | Good             | Acceptable ↓ | Very good ↑ | Good           |
|  | <b>Progress</b>   | Very good ↑      | Acceptable ↓ | Very good ↑ | Very good ↑    |
| <b>Science</b><br>                          | <b>Attainment</b> | Very good ↓      | Acceptable   | Very good ↑ | Very good ↓    |
|  | <b>Progress</b>   | Very good ↑      | Acceptable   | Very good ↑ | Very good ↑    |

|                        | Foundation Stage | Primary    | Secondary | Post-16 |
|------------------------|------------------|------------|-----------|---------|
| <b>Learning skills</b> | Very good ↑      | Acceptable | Good      | Good    |

## 2. Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

|   | Foundation Stage | Primary     | Secondary   | Post-16     |
|---|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Personal development  | Outstanding      | Very good ↓ | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures | Very good ↑      | Good        | Very good ↑ | Very good ↑ |
| Social responsibility and innovation skills                                 | Outstanding      | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |

## 3. Teaching and assessment

|                                 | Foundation Stage | Primary      | Secondary | Post-16 |
|---------------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|---------|
| Teaching for effective learning | Very good ↑      | Acceptable   | Good      | Good    |
| Assessment                      | Very good ↑      | Acceptable ↓ | Good      | Good    |

## 4. Curriculum

|                                      | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary   | Post-16     |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| Curriculum design and implementation | Very good ↑      | Good    | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Curriculum adaptation                | Good             | Good    | Outstanding | Outstanding |

## 5. The protection, care, guidance and support of students

|   | Foundation Stage | Primary     | Secondary   | Post-16     |
|---|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding | Outstanding      | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |
| Care and support  | Good             | Good        | Outstanding | Outstanding |

## 6. Leadership and management

|   | All phases   |
|---|--------------|
| The effectiveness of leadership                 | Good         |
| School self-evaluation and improvement planning | Good         |
| Parents and the community                       | Outstanding  |
| Governance                                      | Acceptable ↓ |
| Management, staffing, facilities and resources  | Good         |



## Main inspection report

The Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) is responsible for inspecting and reporting on the standards reached by students and the quality of education provided in Dubai's private schools.

### Judgements are made on a six-point scale



Using this scale, the *Main inspection report* contains the judgements about the different aspects, phases and subjects that form the work of the school.

It provides the reasons for the answers to the questions in the *Summary for parents and the community*:

- How well did the school perform overall?
- What did the school do well?
- What does the school need to do next?

## 1. Students' achievement

### Foundation Stage

| Subjects                         | Attainment     | Progress       |
|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Islamic education                | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| Arabic as a first language       | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| Arabic as an additional language | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| English                          | Good           | Very good ↑    |
| Mathematics                      | Good           | Very good ↑    |
| Science                          | Very good ↓    | Very good ↑    |

- The majority of children demonstrated good knowledge, skills and understanding in all elements of English. Attainment was generally above age-related expectations and, given the children's starting points, these levels of attainment represented very good progress in lessons and over time. Information from assessment, such as the 'learning journeys', daily observations and 'fact sheets' confirmed that the large majority of children were making better than expected progress in communication and comprehension. This was an improvement from last year. Different groups of children were making similarly very good progress.
- In mathematics, children made very good progress from their starting points and attained above expectations for their age. Children had a firm understanding of fundamental mathematics. They worked with numbers up to 20 confidently and could use models to compare and represent quantities in a set. In lessons, the large majority of children made significant gains in their mathematical knowledge in relation to their starting points. This reflected an improvement over the previous year. Different groups made similar rates of progress.
- Attainment in science was well above expectations because children demonstrated very good levels of understanding of scientific concepts. Enquiry skills such as investigating, skills in using scientific equipment and grasp of simple scientific vocabulary were generally above curriculum expectations. Children investigated changes of matter and were familiar with basic scientific concepts such as sinking, floating and electrical circuits. Progress had accelerated this year with most groups making better than expected progress over time in developing their scientific knowledge, skills and understanding.

### Primary

| Subjects                         | Attainment   | Progress     |
|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Islamic education                | Acceptable   | Acceptable   |
| Arabic as a first language       | Acceptable ↓ | Acceptable ↓ |
| Arabic as an additional language | Acceptable   | Acceptable   |
| English                          | Acceptable   | Acceptable   |
| Mathematics                      | Acceptable ↓ | Acceptable ↓ |
| Science                          | Acceptable   | Acceptable   |

- In Islamic education, most students demonstrated levels of knowledge, skills and understanding that were in line with national curriculum standards. Students had basic knowledge about the key principles of faith and worship in Islam. They could explain the Five Pillars of Islam and had detailed knowledge about fasting, prayers and zakat. Most showed appropriate knowledge of Seerah as they could relate stories of some prophets of Allah. Appropriate progress was being made in relation to relevant learning objectives. However, students' progress in understanding the value of what they were learning and how it applied to their own lives was less well developed.
- Students' attainment levels in Arabic as a first language, as demonstrated through the internal unified GEMS schools assessments, were high and were improving year-on-year. However, in lessons, students did not demonstrate basic skills that matched those indicated by their tests results. In Year 1, most students knew vowels and their positions in words, and could identify high frequency words. In Year 3, students could talk about how people were employed in the UAE in the past and related it to the present. Students made slower progress in developing their fluency in reading and extended writing skills.
- Students' attainment levels in Arabic as an additional language, were not as high as the school's internal assessments. In the absence of externally benchmarked measures for national and international comparisons, attainment was broadly in line with expected standards. In Year 1, most students could identify high frequency words. In Year 6, students could list their hobbies. Progress was broadly acceptable. Listening and speaking were progressing well, but fluency in reading and writing skills were developing at a slower pace. Girls and boys were showing similar progress.
- Good levels of attainment were achieved in English in reading at the end of Key Stage 1; that is the end of Year 2. National and international test results showed students performed well in reading. In Year 2, higher attaining students were able to create their own fables using a high standard of descriptive writing. They could sequence it correctly using a storyboard. However, these good levels and skills were not sustained through to the end of the primary stage. Progress in writing was the slowest of all the elements of the subject across the phase.
- Attainment was broadly in line with curriculum expectations in mathematics. By the end of the primary phase, most students had a functional understanding of number, shape and data handling. Their ability to solve problems was less developed. In the past few years, progress over time had declined in relation to students' starting points, curriculum expectations and previous performance in international tests. Students made acceptable progress in lessons and this was similar for all groups of students.
- Attainment in science was acceptable, as in English and mathematics. As students progressed through the primary phase, they improved their understanding of scientific phenomena. For example, students in Year 6 had a good understanding of how to separate mixtures and how drugs had both positive and negative attributes. Students' progress to the end of Key Stage 2 (that is Year 6) was acceptable. The skills needed to form opinions and to prove them, through appropriate investigations, were underdeveloped and this hampered attainment and progress from being good. Progress was similar for different groups of students.

| Secondary                        |             |             |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Subjects                         | Attainment  | Progress    |
| Islamic education                | Acceptable  | Acceptable  |
| Arabic as a first language       | Acceptable  | Acceptable  |
| Arabic as an additional language | Acceptable  | Acceptable  |
| English                          | Very good ↓ | Very good ↓ |
| Mathematics                      | Very good ↑ | Very good ↑ |
| Science                          | Very good ↑ | Very good ↑ |

- In Islamic education, most students attained levels that were in line with curriculum and national standards. National tests and assessments confirmed acceptable attainment. Similarly, progress was acceptable overall, both in lessons and over time. Although, students had a basic knowledge of Islamic concepts, the linking of this knowledge to real life and applying the Islamic values to their own lives were limited. Students made expected progress with few variations in the rates of progress between the different groups.
- Students' attainment levels in Arabic as a first language as assessed through internal and national assessments did not match students' actual standards in their language performance. Attainment and progress were acceptable. Unsurprisingly, speaking, listening and reading were more developed than writing. For example, most of the students in Year 10 were able to independently explain the meaning of a poem that they had read, whereas by the end of the secondary phase, most students could only write short compositions. This limited their attainment and progress. Girls made better progress than boys.
- Externally benchmarked tests were not available for Arabic as an additional language. Students' attainment as judged from internal assessments was high, but as in Arabic as a first language, students' performance in class was only of an acceptable standard. Most students used an acceptable range of vocabulary in speaking and writing. They made acceptable progress in understanding the meanings of individual words and were developing their writing skills. However, the development of fluent writing was lagging behind. Girls made better progress than boys.
- Most students at the beginning of Key Stage 3 in Year 7 attained levels in line with curriculum standards in English through to the end of Key Stage in Year 9. By Year 11, results in IGCSE were outstanding with all students in English literature achieving A\* to A. By then, most students had wide knowledge and an excellent understanding of the range of language techniques used to create effect and applied these to their own creative writing. Students used rich and varied language in discussions and when sharing their learning with others. This represented very good progress. Broadly, different groups of students made similar rates of progress from their starting points.
- Students entered the secondary phase with acceptable attainment in mathematics. After consolidating their basic skills in Years 7 and 8 they were achieving well by Year 9. Students made rapid and sustained progress in lessons and over time in relation to their starting points. Knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts and problem solving developed rapidly for all students, especially in number and algebra. Students' understanding was a little weaker in probability. Examination results in Year 11 were very good. Boys' attainment and progress was significantly better than that of girls, especially in relation to the application of skills and reasoning.

- In science, a large majority of students were working above the expected age-related levels when judged by both the school curriculum standards and by external examinations. Attainment and progress were better in the later years of the secondary phase. Students' understanding was generally very good. This was illustrated, for example, in their understanding of chemical reactions and equations in the extraction of iron, the structures and functions of enzymes and the role of resistors in electrical circuits. All groups of students, including those with SEND, used investigations to further improve their thinking and understanding of scientific processes. This had resulted in an improving trend of attainment and progress in this phase over time.

### Post-16

| Subjects                         | Attainment     | Progress       |
|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Islamic education                | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| Arabic as a first language       | Acceptable     | Acceptable     |
| Arabic as an additional language | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| English                          | Outstanding    | Outstanding    |
| Mathematics                      | Good           | Very good ↑    |
| Science                          | Very good ↓    | Very good ↑    |

- In Islamic education, students attained levels that were in line with national curriculum standards. They had a basic knowledge about the Prophet Mohammad's life (PBUH), as the prophet before the revelation, and also could recite the prophet's sayings. They could understand and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of divorce and the meanings of Fiqh and Sharia'a. Generally students had appropriate knowledge of Islam's etiquettes and values. However, only a few students confidently knew how these could be applied to their daily lives. Most groups of students made expected progress as measured against lesson objectives. Students' abilities to memorise and recite the Holy Qur'an were less developed.
- Attainment in Arabic as a first language continued to be acceptable through the post-16 phase. Students' skills in speaking, listening and reading were developing at a steady pace. This was confirmed by the results of national tests. Students had an appropriate range of vocabulary, which they could use in class discussions. They knew basic grammatical rules. However, opportunities for writing were mainly limited to copying from the textbook or from the white board. The progress of most students was in line with curriculum standards and was similar for the different groups.
- Most groups of students, achieved at a high level in English, including in external examinations. Students effectively used their debating skills to develop the merits of different characters and potential plots. They were eloquent and could effectively articulate their point of view to others. They could effectively employ a range of literary techniques to create a sense of imagery and empathy in their writing. For example, in Year 13, students shared their critical commentary of Othello using a blog and tweets in order to prompt discussion and develop ideas. Progress was similarly outstanding. A large minority of the students starting advanced courses came from other schools.
- Students reached high standards in almost all aspects of mathematics. This was reflected in an upward trend in external examination results. Students were able to successfully build on previous learning, for example in their understanding of the transformation of graphs. Girls, whilst making rapid progress, did not make quite as much progress as boys in lessons and over time. In particular, a minority of girls found the application of mathematics difficult, especially in mechanics. Nevertheless, the progress against curriculum standards of a significant proportion of students was very good.

- In science, attainment and progress were very good by the end of Year 13. This maintained a trend where the large majority of students achieved results that were above national and international examination expectations. Students had developed very good knowledge and investigative skills in physics when they used formula to calculate values in alternating currents and in biology when comparing structures of blood vessels and their roles in the circulatory system. They displayed similar attributes in chemistry when they analysed the temperatures and volumes of gases and displayed their interrelationships using formula and graphs.

|                 | Foundation Stage  | Primary    | Secondary | Post-16 |
|-----------------|---|------------|-----------|---------|
| Learning skills | Very good  | Acceptable | Good      | Good    |

- Throughout the school, students had positive attitudes to learning and worked hard. Older students showed a very mature approach, which led to successful learning. In Foundation Stage, secondary and post-16 phases, students took responsibility for improving their work, those in primary less so. Students in the post-16 phase had well-developed skills in self-assessment and understood how they could improve their learning further.
- Collaboration in lessons between students was strong in most parts of the school, but especially in the core areas of English, mathematics and science between Years 9 and 13, where insightful and reflective dialogue extended learning. It was weaker in the primary phase and in Arabic and Islamic education because students were less involved in the learning and had insufficient opportunities to work together.
- Students made very good links between their learning and their real lives, for example in science where investigations were linked to industry. In the primary phase they occasionally linked their learning across subjects, for example when measuring in mathematics and science; and in Arabic, where learning was linked to the study of the UAE, but this was not common.
- Children in the Foundation Stage made very good use of the available technology; working independently on mobile devices and confidently with interactive whiteboards. The development of critical thinking, enquiry and research was limited in the primary phase; there were few examples of students routinely using information technology as a learning tool. As students progressed through school these skills improved significantly.

## 2. Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills

|                      | Foundation Stage | Primary   | Secondary   | Post-16     |
|----------------------|------------------|---|-------------|-------------|
| Personal development | Outstanding      | Very good  | Outstanding | Outstanding |

- Students had very positive and responsible attitudes even in the less effective lessons. Students were keen to learn and were proud of their achievements, seeking out visitors so that they could share what they and the school had accomplished. They demonstrated strong self-reliance and thrived on critical feedback.

- Students were consistently self-disciplined and respond very well to others. They resolved difficulties in mature ways. The 'senior student leadership team' was influential in enhancing student relationships across the school. However, in a few lessons, when classroom management was not appropriate, a small number of primary students showed insufficient self-discipline.
- Students were sensitive and empathetic to the needs and differences of others, supporting each other in lessons. Many examples were observed of students choosing to support those needing help. As a result, relationships amongst students and with staff were very respectful and considerate.
- Students demonstrated an excellent understanding of healthy living. They consistently made wise choices about what to eat and frequently initiated and participated in activities that promoted healthy lifestyles. Many projects related to healthy life were conducted with the Clean Energy Business Council.
- Students were punctual to school at the beginning of the day and attendance was excellent. There were some instances of lateness to lessons during the school day, which interrupted and reduced learning.

|  | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary   | Post-16     |
|--|------------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures</b> | Very good ↑      | Good    | Very good ↑ | Very good ↑ |

- Children across the Foundation Stage recognised the role of Islam in the society of Dubai and could sing the National Anthem, use Islamic greetings and identify the purposes of a mosque. Students generally had a clear understanding of how Islamic values influenced contemporary society. They were able to provide examples of how they appreciated the friendship, fairness and respect promoted by Islam.
- Children in the Foundation Stage were able to talk about many features of the UAE. They could identify the flag, give names for the common Arabic dress and describe which animals were important to the region. The knowledge of students in the primary phase was, by contrast, less detailed. Older students could explained local traditions and heritage and compare them with practices and enterprise in contemporary Dubai.
- Students, at their age-appropriate level, had a clear appreciation of their own culture and the variety and range of different cultures from around the world. An exception was that some students had a less developed understanding of the local Arabic culture. Students were respectful towards students of different nationalities, languages and religions.

|  | Foundation Stage | Primary     | Secondary   | Post-16     |
|--|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Social responsibility and innovation skills</b> | Outstanding      | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |

- Students had excellent work ethic. Some led others confidently and had creative and very practical ideas. For example, Year 12 students gave support to Year 10 students weekly in mathematics and science. Well-planned projects and enterprise activities had significant social impact. The older students made informed economic decisions and as a result, changes were made to the quality of food in the canteen.

- Students were responsible and contributed actively to the life of the school and wider communities. Responsibilities were accepted and events well planned, for example, the 'senior student leadership team' organised the International Day celebration. Students had a very positive effect on the school and wider community through the different schools committees, such as the environmental club.
- Students showed an insightful understanding of environmental sustainability. They actively looked for ways to care for and to improve their school environment and were successful in projects such as 'The Litter and Energy Conserve.' They initiated schemes to support conservation beyond school, for example conducting workshops and presentations to other schools, and understood that economic decisions affected the sustainability of the environment.

### 3. Teaching and assessment

|                                 | Foundation Stage  | Primary    | Secondary | Post-16 |
|---------------------------------|---|------------|-----------|---------|
| Teaching for effective learning | Very good  | Acceptable | Good      | Good    |

- Most teachers used their subject knowledge effectively to inspire and encourage students, particularly in the secondary and post-16 phases. Strategies used were well suited to the developmental needs of the students. This was a considerable strength of teachers in the Foundations Stage, who skillfully integrated different subjects into holistic themes. In some lessons in the primary phase, teachers had insufficient strategies to manage student engagement.
- There was a high level of consistency in planning across classes and phases. Most teachers included measurable learning objectives and an outline of the expected learning actions. In some instances, teachers were trying to include each and every element from the planning format rather than making an informed judgement about what was most effective. The use of teaching assistants in the Foundation Stage was very effective.
- The quality of questioning in the primary phase was too variable; often purpose was limited to recall and checking understanding. In better lessons, teachers acted as facilitators of learning, using higher order questioning to probe and develop students' skills in analysing and evaluating. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, the teacher skillfully engaged students in critical dialogue about a role play produced by them.
- Teachers' abilities to plan activities that meet the needs of different groups of students were developing. This was a current focus of training. Teachers were generally less effective in Islamic education and in the primary phase. However, in the Foundation Stage teachers personalised learning activities accurately in order to match these to children's learning needs.
- Students' critical thinking and problem solving were encouraged through a range of planned opportunities. For example, in 'Innovation Week', students designed a programming code for new computer games. Opportunities for students to develop these skills were less frequent in the primary phase. Projects that required Internet research and enquiry were often features of homework as there were limited resources available in school.
- The quality of teaching in Arabic was inconsistent due to teachers being less secure in their knowledge of the subject, planning activities that did not match needs of groups of students and being less than effective with their time management.

|            | Foundation Stage  | Primary  | Secondary | Post-16 |
|------------|---|--|-----------|---------|
| Assessment | Very good  | Acceptable  | Good      | Good    |

- Internal assessment systems were coherent and accurately aligned to curriculum standards in most core subjects. They were particularly robust in the Foundation Stage, where teachers were skillful in assessing children on a day-to-day basis. New quality assurance processes had been introduced to provide reliable data. However, as yet, assessments in Arabic did not show a sufficiently accurate picture of students' attainment and progress.
- The school used a wide range of external testing which enabled teachers to benchmark student performance against national and international results. For example, at the end of the Foundation Stage, the students' baseline was established using external diagnostic testing. Further standardised testing was used through the school to track student progress.
- Students' assessment data was carefully analysed by teachers and the leadership team to confirm the progress of different groups of students against their individual targets. However, the sharing of data between transition points needed to be strengthened, for example from the early years to primary phase, in order to support students' progress more effectively, especially from Foundation Stage into Year 1.
- In the majority of the core subjects, analysis of assessment data was used effectively to identify any gaps in learning and then inform teachers' planning and to modify the curriculum. For example, an after-school literacy session had been planned to intensify support given to under-performing students.
- Teachers had access to the assessment data available in school and the majority of teachers used this successfully to support students' learning. Older students were successfully developing the skills needed to assess their own work critically, using examination rubrics and setting their own targets for improvement.

#### 4. Curriculum

|                                      | Foundation Stage  | Primary | Secondary   | Post-16     |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------|-------------|-------------|
| Curriculum design and implementation | Very good  | Good    | Outstanding | Outstanding |

- The curriculum was broad and balanced. It was compliant with the Ministry of Education and the New National Curriculum for England. In the upper secondary and post-16 phases, there was a strong emphasis on using enquiry and critical thinking and in the primary phase the school was successfully developing more opportunities for practical experiences, particularly in science.
- The curriculum was generally well planned in helping students build their skills and knowledge progressively. However, in the primary phase, there were instances of lesson objectives being repeated in consecutive years, resulting in little progress. Leaders recognised the need to make improvements in transition. Older students were effectively prepared for higher education and the world of work.

- In the Foundation Stage, the adoption of ‘child-centred’ learning provided valuable opportunities for children to choose activities and follow their interests. In the upper secondary phase, the school offered students a wide range of options, including Arabic. The choice of academic and vocational pathways, in the post-16 phase, enabled students to take courses, which suited their abilities and learning styles.
- The integrated curriculum in the Foundation Stage enabled children to make meaningful connections in their learning. In the secondary and post-16 phases, cross-curricular links, for example in mathematics and science, were carefully designed. Planned opportunities to make links with other subjects were limited in the primary phase curriculum.
- The school regularly reviewed the curriculum in the light of assessment and the new National Curriculum of England. Modifications were made to enhance skills in line with National Agenda targets. Examples of this included a sharper focus on reading comprehension in English, an emphasis on mental arithmetic and greater opportunities for investigation in science. Adjustments to the curriculum to help students understand issues in the UAE were developing in social studies.
- The subject of the UAE social studies has been skilfully woven into the curriculum of world studies. Cross-curricular activities were meaningfully planned and aligned to the school, Emirate and national agendas providing many opportunities for students to strengthen their life and social responsibility skills.

|                              | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary   | Post-16     |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Curriculum adaptation</b> | Good             | Good    | Outstanding | Outstanding |

- Children benefitted from a rich curriculum in the Foundation Stage, which provided exciting learning opportunities. The school had adapted the curriculum to meet the needs of most groups of students including those with SEND and English language learners, but modifications were not as effective in the primary phase or in the curriculum for Arabic subjects.
- In the secondary and post-16 phases, the school provided an excellent range of opportunities for enterprise and community service. Events such as Dragon's Den and the work experience programme developed students' life skills and gave them a deeper understanding of the world of work. Extra-curricular activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, the scholars' club and team sports enabled students to follow their interests and aspirations.
- Students' understanding of the UAE values, culture and society was developed appropriately through most areas of the curriculum for example in art and music. The 'Know your UAE' topic promoted understanding of the heritage of the Emirates. However in Islamic education, by contrast, there were fewer opportunities for students to develop their understanding of the UAE's culture and society.
- The school had integrated Arabic language into all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Teachers modeled the language and children learnt through songs and role-play.

### 5. The protection, care, guidance and support of students

|  | Foundation Stage | Primary     | Secondary   | Post-16     |
|--|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding</b> | Outstanding      | Outstanding | Outstanding | Outstanding |

- The school's child protection and safeguarding policies were clearly articulated and well understood by students, staff and parents resulting in very effective arrangements. Students reported how well informed they were on issues such as cyber bullying because they formed part of their studies. Staff, including pastoral and medical colleagues, were regularly updated with training which resulted in outstanding care for all students.
- There was a very detailed health and safety policy in place, accompanied by similarly strong procedures. Risk assessments were undertaken regularly and informed future practices. Students highly commended the school for looking after them well, for example they reported how the priority for safety on the buses was an important and very successful aspect of school life.
- Comprehensive audits were carried out on the buildings and equipment and deficiencies were fixed appropriately and quickly. Records of successful regular fire drills were in place and staff and students were clear about the routines for such an event. The school had well qualified nurses and a doctor who were dealing with medical procedures extremely thoroughly.
- The premises and facilities were in a good order and were well maintained. However, many classrooms, because of their limited size, were not suited to the educational needs of the number of students in the class. Recent improvements to Foundation Stage facilities had made a difference to students' learning experiences.
- Aspects of healthy lifestyles, such as nutritional food choices and drug awareness, were comprehensively covered in the science curriculum. A broad programme of physical education, sporting competitions and studies on the positive impact of exercise on the body, further complimented this positive provision.

|                         | Foundation Stage | Primary | Secondary   | Post-16     |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Care and support</b> | Good             | Good    | Outstanding | Outstanding |

- Teachers developed excellent relationships with children in the Foundation Stage and teachers were well aware of the children's needs. In the secondary and post-16 phases there was a very good rapport between staff and students; both groups clearly understood what was expected. This was also the case in the primary phase, however a minority of class teachers was not skilled at managing boys' behaviour effectively.
- The school had effective systems in place to promote and reward good attendance. Systems for managing absences were highly effective. Staff worked closely with parents when there were concerns about absence and lateness. Students returning late to class following break times was an issue in some classes, resulting in the loss of teaching time.

- The school was highly inclusive and welcomed students with SEND. Experienced members of staff were skilled in identifying students with SEND and used the KHDA categories appropriately across the school. The school had established a register for gifted and talented students and were using it effectively in secondary and post-16 phases.
- Staff in the achievement centre provided effective support to students with SEND and planned activities to help students achieve their next steps in learning. They gave valuable guidance to students with SEND about how to manage their behaviour. However, not all class teachers planned activities to meet the individual needs of the students with SEND. Overall students with SEND made acceptable progress.
- Students were able to turn to members of staff for guidance and support. The school counselor showed high levels of care when dealing with students' concerns. The school provided excellent guidance on higher education and careers to enable students to make informed choices about future pathways.

### Provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

The overall effectiveness of provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities

Acceptable

- The school was rightly proud of its highly inclusive ethos and welcomed students with a wide range of difficulties and disabilities. The director was effective in the day-to-day management of the achievement centre and understood the needs of the students. However, the school did not undertake strategic planning and the school's self-evaluation of its SEND provision was not accurate.
- Staff was skilled at using of a range of assessment tools to identify students with SEND and used the KHDA categories appropriately. The school had addressed a recommendation from the previous report and early identification of children in the Foundation Stage was embedded effectively.
- The school kept parents well informed of their children's achievements and parents valued the support and guidance given by the achievement centre staff. Home-school communication books provided valuable information and twice yearly reports detailed students' achievements as well as academic and personal targets.
- SEND teachers were skilled at planning activities in the achievement centre to meet the students' individual need. The quality of support for students with SEND in classrooms had improved since the last inspection. However, some teachers, particularly in the primary phase, still lacked the ability to effectively modify their plans in order to ensure that the activities were sufficiently challenging to enable these students to reach their targets.
- Overall students with SEND made progress in line with their peers and their support plans. They made the best progress when they worked individually or in small groups with specialist staff. Close attention was paid to collecting data on achievements. However, there were missed opportunities to use this information to make meaningful links between students' personal and academic development in order to give a holistic picture of progress.

## 6. Leadership and management

### The effectiveness of leadership

Good

- School leaders set a clear direction and vision of 'excellence in all that we do.' The shared focus was on developing students' academic and personal skills. Senior leaders were committed to the national priority of attaining the highest standard of education set within the context of Islamic values and an Arabic culture as well as welcoming students of all academic and physical abilities.
- The school had a track record of promoting existing staff to leadership positions. The benefit was that these staff understood the existing priorities and direction. A few senior leaders were new to their positions and had not had the time to make a full impact on academic attainment and students' personal development. More established leaders were setting a clearly understood culture of improvement.
- The senior leadership team had been restructured, this year, so that leaders of Foundation Stage and primary had responsibilities for fewer children and students. Curriculum leaders worked alongside year leaders in secondary and post-16 phases only. Roles and responsibilities were clearly detailed and meeting schedules facilitated close links between middle and senior leaders. Learning coaches effectively supported improvements to teaching in the primary phase.
- Mostly leaders were successfully addressing a narrow range of initiatives in order to improve students' academic and personal growth. Leaders in the primary phase were more broadly focused, working hard to develop a wide range of skills in teachers, rather than establishing a common baseline and building incrementally from that position.
- Leaders in the Foundation Stage had successfully improved key aspects of performance including progress. Good attainment and progress had been sustained in the secondary and post-16 phases due to the high quality of leadership. The changes in the leadership of the primary phase were recent and too early to impact on students' outcomes. Senior leaders ensured accountability and compliance.

### School self-evaluation and improvement planning

Good

- The school had a clear process to collect a large amount of information from a wide range of sources, including both internal and external data and outcomes from monitoring the quality of teaching. The information was effectively collated so the school had firm ideas about areas for improvement. In most phases, leaders successfully planned improvements closely aligned to the needs of the students and the teachers.
- The school had established effective systems for monitoring teaching and learning. The evaluation of teachers' strengths was on-going and resulting action taken according to need. Appropriate support was given to individuals and a clear link had been made with performance management. Senior staff were more effective in evaluating the quality of provision than the students' academic performance, especially in Arabic and Islamic education.
- The school development plan accurately focused on a limited number of key priorities. Parts of the plan did not establish clearly the baseline from which to develop. For example, the plan to improve teaching had a high number of initiatives, all of which were important, but of varied priority. The most effective planning identified realistic timelines and measurable success criteria.

- The most notable improvement was provision for children in the Foundation Stage. The quality of systems for gathering and using assessment, particularly the use of value-added data had also improved greatly since last year. However, perennial problems with attainment and progress in Arabic languages, Islamic education and the quality of teaching and learning in the primary phase were still present.

### Partnerships with parents and the community

Outstanding

- The school had an effective and influential parents' association. Elected parents held monthly meetings with the principal to discuss ways in which they could support improvements. The association supported the school by organising events, raising money for resources and providing a forum for discussions on operational matters. A good example was the family fiesta, which brought people together in a parents' engagement week.
- Through a range of strategies, parents had excellent information about their children's progress. Assessment results were shared and parents' meetings discussed individual children's performance, progress and future targets. Parents felt that teachers were readily accessible and that concerns would be dealt with effectively and promptly. To keep the parent body informed about the current practices, the school hosted regular workshops.
- Reporting to parents was thorough and took place three times a year. Reports contained detailed information about each student's attainment in the different areas of each subject as well as the student's next steps. A parent relationship representative was a very effective channel through which home/school communications could take place. There was no 'real time' access for parents to teacher's on-going assessments.
- Through the parent body, the school had made many links with businesses, allowing students to experience the world of work. For example, with Dubai Municipality. Additionally, many connections had been established with other schools. Where these connections and partnerships existed, they benefited students enormously both academically and in their personal and social development.

## Governance

Acceptable ↓

- The governing body had narrow representation, consisting mostly of representatives from the school's corporate body. They sought stakeholder views, through the use of regular parental and student surveys. The parents' association supported the school by organising events, raising money for resources and acting as a forum for discussions on school operational matters.
- There were well-established patterns of meetings between the governing body and school leaders as well as with triads of schools to address issues. The school's management and information system allowed live monitoring of school performance progress. In spite of these measures, the governing body did not sufficiently exercise its duty to closely monitor and guide the school in some of its key functions, for example in completing the school self-evaluation form.
- The governing body had tried to overcome many of the school's barriers to improvement. They had enabled the restructuring of the primary leadership team in order to develop teaching and learning in the primary phase. In addition, they had connected the school with support from other schools in its organisation and brokered external training in order to develop the practices of teachers of Arabic and Islamic education. Plans to address the recommendation from the previous inspection to alleviate the overcrowding in many classrooms were not in place.

## Management, staffing, facilities and resources

Good

- The day-to day running of the school was effectively and efficiently managed and timetabling procedures were aiding the smooth transitions in learning. Although, the school dealt effectively with poor punctuality, a number of students arrived late for some lessons and this disrupted learning. This was a particular issue immediately after breaks.
- Teachers and support staff were deployed effectively, according to their phase and subject specialisms, to facilitate students' achievements. Generally well qualified, they had a range of experiences that complimented the aims of the school and the high quality curriculum. A number of teachers of Islamic education and Arabic were still in the process of becoming fully qualified under KHDA requirements.
- The premises and facilities were of a sufficient quality to support effective teaching and learning in most phases. However, many classrooms were not of a suitable size for the number of students in the class. This significantly restricted students' mobility and prevented practical learning. Specialist facilities supported a broad and balanced curriculum.
- The use of interactive white boards enhanced learning and the school had taken steps to improve library resources, including more books to support Islamic education and Arabic learning. Investment in the Foundation Stage classrooms had also improved children's experiences, particularly in allowing children to choose their learning activities independently. Across the school, there were limited numbers of portable computers, which inhibited investigations and research work.

## The views of the parents, teachers and students

Before the inspection, the views of the parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form inspection judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

| Responses to the surveys  |           |     |
|---|-----------|-----|
| Responses received  | Number    |     |
| <b>Parents*</b><br>  | 2015-2016 | 137 |
|   | 2014-2015 | 471 |
| <b>Teachers</b><br>  | 146       |     |
| <b>Students</b><br> | 330       |     |

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

- Most parents and teachers who responded to the survey were very positive about all aspects that were surveyed.
- Most students felt that they made good progress in English, mathematics and science. Most parents supported this view.
- Most parents believed that students were safe on the school buses. Most students confirmed that they felt safe too.
- Most parents and teachers felt that the school listened to their views. However, only a minority of students held this view.
- In contrast, most students responded that they were involved in a student leadership programme.

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)