



National Agenda



Early years



Special educational  
needs and disabilities



Innovation

## Inspection Report 2015-2016

**Modern Skills School**

Curriculum: US

Overall rating: Acceptable

Read more about the school ➔



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‘Without  
challenges,  
we won’t feel  
the taste of  
success and  
happiness’



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

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## School information

### General information



Location	Al Muhaisnah
Type of school	Private
Opening year of school	2006
Website	www.dubai-sms.com
Telephone	04-2887765
Address	Dubai , Muhaisanah First - PO BOX 57475
Principal	Huda Al Samkari
Language of instruction	English
Inspection dates	25 to 28 January 2016

### Students



Gender of students	Boys and girls
Age range	4-17
Grades or year groups	Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12
Number of students on roll	1,590
Number of children in pre-kindergarten	NA
Number of Emirati students	1,385
Number of students with SEND	284
Largest nationality group of students	Emirati

### Teachers / Support staff



Number of teachers	98
Largest nationality group of teachers	Egyptian
Number of teaching assistants	38
Teacher-student ratio	1:16
Number of guidance counsellors	1
Teacher turnover	23%

### Curriculum



Educational permit / License	US
Main curriculum	US / CCSS, California
External tests and examinations	IBT, MAP, SAT, TOFEL
Accreditation	None
National Agenda benchmark tests	IBT

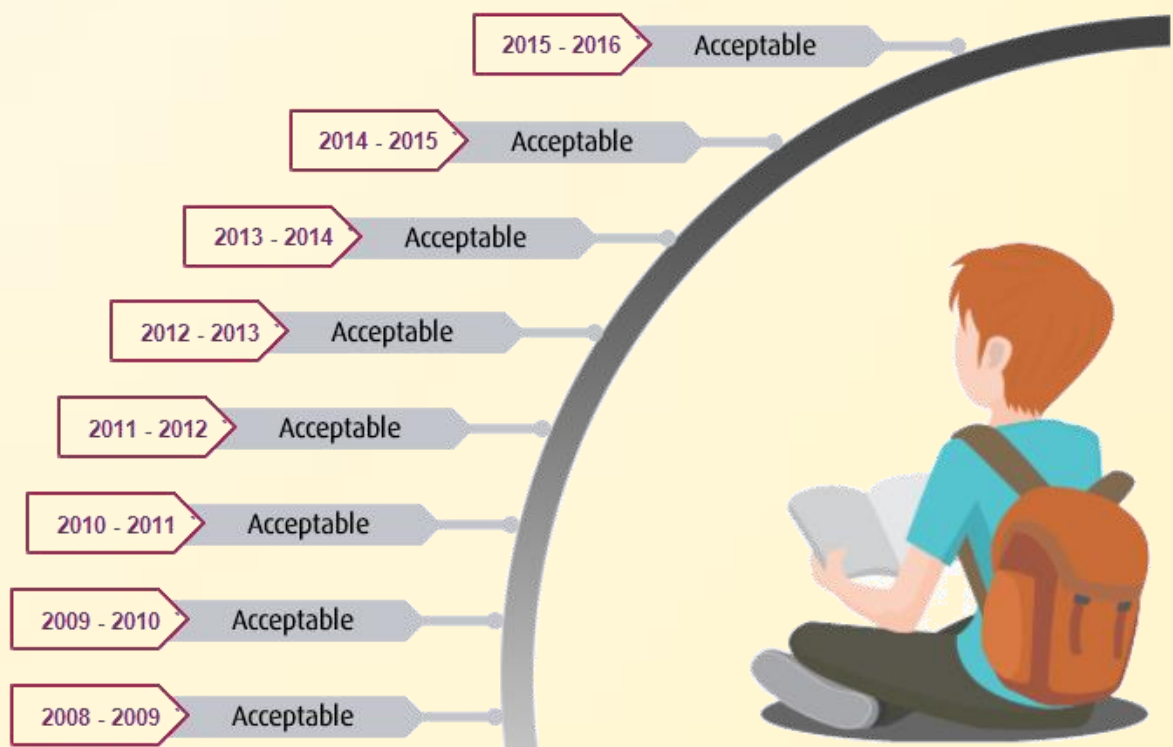


## Summary for parents and the community

**Modern Skills School** was inspected by DSIB from 25 to 28 January 2016. The overall quality of education provided by the school was found to be **acceptable**.

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 judgments 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, **Modern Skills School** provided an **acceptable** quality of education for its students.

- Attainment and progress were acceptable in English, mathematics and science in the first three phases and good in high school. In Islamic education achievement was good across elementary, middle and high schools. In Arabic as a first language, students' performance was good in elementary and acceptable in the other phases. Students showed better learning skills in high school than in the other phases.
- Students behaved positively. They responded well to teachers' feedback, adopted healthy life habits, and were punctual and responsible learners. Their understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati culture was strong. Their knowledge of different cultures was less secure. Their social responsibility was developing well. It was acceptable in the kindergarten (KG) and very good in high school.
- Teaching was good in high school and acceptable elsewhere. Teachers had secure subject knowledge and planned their lessons appropriately. Teachers generally engaged their students well. Internal assessment was consistent but did not routinely reflect the actual levels of students' achievements in lessons and in external assessment. Data was analyzed and used to identify gaps in learning. External assessment was used more to benchmark attainment.
- The curriculum was aligned with Common Core Standards in English and mathematics, Next Generation Standards in science and California State Standards in other subjects. It was also compliant with Ministry of Education requirements in Arabic and Islamic education. Cross-curricular links were not well integrated. The curriculum had been reviewed recently under the guidance of new senior leadership. It did not meet the needs of all groups of students.
- Health and safety arrangements were good. Staff ensured security, buildings were well maintained and facilities provided a safe and inclusive environment. Students' wellbeing was a priority and staff supported students appropriately. Expert support was provided for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), but teachers' knowledge of how to improve those students' performance was inconsistent.
- The principal and newly appointed senior leaders showed good capacity to improve the school. Despite school self-evaluation being inaccurate, leaders were generally aware of areas needing development. Partnerships with parents and the community were a strength. The governing board's role was indistinct, but members provided broadly appropriate support and held leaders to account, Day-to-day management was effective. Teacher turnover and retention were still a challenge.



### What did the school do well?

- Students' attainment and progress in Islamic education across the phases and the high school students' outcomes in English, mathematics and science were good
- Students good levels of personal and social responsibility and higher levels of understanding and appreciation of Islamic values and Emirati culture in all phases
- The newly appointed members of the senior leadership team's initiatives to improve the curriculum, teaching and learning and professional development
- The good relationships with parents which involved them actively in their children's learning and engaged them in social activities and events.



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

- Improve students' academic achievement across all subjects and phases by:
  - using valid internal and external assessment information in the planning of teaching and learning activities
  - applying effective teaching strategies that meet the needs of all students
  - modifying the curriculum to integrate meaningful and relevant opportunities that promote critical thinking, independent learning, problem-solving and creativity.
- Develop a common and shared understanding of high quality teaching and learning among teachers and leaders at all levels.
- Improve the existing systems for monitoring teaching to ensure the accurate identification of specific areas for improvement and the implementation of tailored professional development.
- Ensure that the school self-evaluation processes and procedures are comprehensive and rigorous and accurately measuring the school's performance in all aspects, and that the school's development plans are well linked to improvement needs identified by internal and external evaluations.
- Draw a clear distinction between the strategic and oversight role of the governing board and the leadership role of the school management team.



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

- The new special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and his team had been successful in promoting an inclusive ethos and in raising the profile of students with SEND around the school. Their evaluation of the effectiveness of provision for SEND was inaccurate. New systems had not had sufficient time to become embedded.
- The identification of students with SEND was improving. However, there was a lack of clarity about the different categories of need.
- Parents were actively involved in identifying their child's needs and in supporting them at home. They appreciated the school's care, guidance and support. Communication systems were effective.
- Progress reports did not provide sufficient detail about how well students were doing and what they needed to do to improve further. The curriculum was not sufficiently modified to meet the needs of students with SEND. Individual education plans (IEPs) did not consistently provide clear targets for improvement.
- Some teachers were very effective in meeting students' needs, but too many teachers had the same expectation for all students regardless of ability. The school's data on students' achievements did not provide a valid measure of progress over time and did not enable teachers or students to identify next steps in learning. Progress in lessons was too variable ranging from weak to very good.

### 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 'Program 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 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 judgment on the progress towards meeting the National Agenda targets.
- The school had informed parents about the National Agenda, TIMSS and PISA tests and about international benchmark testing. Governors were aware of the National Agenda parameters, understood the need for international benchmarking tests and knew the school targets. Students also had awareness and good understanding of how it influenced what happened at school.
- The school had aligned its English and mathematics curriculum to the Common Core State Standards and science to the Next Generation Standards, but had only planned to introduce national tests for Arabic (NAP). The analysis of texts was a strong feature of the English curriculum in the high school. Advanced Placement (AP) courses in English, mathematics and science offered additional challenge.
- Teachers' strategies to develop critical thinking and inquiry were developing. In the teaching of science in the high school and in some English lessons across the school, students' critical thinking skills were systematically developed. In the elementary phase students' research was focused on finding knowledge rather than analyzing or reasoning.
- The school had invested in additional resources to support the teaching of science. It had also subscribed to several on-line providers for targeted comprehension practice for students in elementary and high school. The program was popular with the younger phase. As yet, there had not been significant improvement to comprehension scores of students in high school.



## 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:

- School leaders understood the importance of the national innovation agenda and were determined to respond to the range of local and national innovation initiatives. Key leaders and teachers had responsibility for developing the school community's culture of innovation. The learning environment and infrastructure, when used creatively, supported the development of students' innovation skills. The curriculum and the school's approach to its delivery provided opportunities for students to formally and informally begin to be innovative.

Overall school performance

Acceptable

1. Students' achievement

		KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Islamic education</b> 	<b>Attainment</b>	Not applicable	Good	Good	Good
	<b>Progress</b>	Not applicable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Arabic as a first language</b> 	<b>Attainment</b>	Not applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable ↓
	<b>Progress</b>	Not applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b> 	<b>Attainment</b>	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
	<b>Progress</b>	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
<b>English</b> 	<b>Attainment</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
	<b>Progress</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
<b>Mathematics</b> 	<b>Attainment</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
	<b>Progress</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
<b>Science</b> 	<b>Attainment</b>	Acceptable ↑	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
	<b>Progress</b>	Acceptable ↑	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Learning skills</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal development	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Outstanding
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Acceptable	Good	Good	Very good ↑

## 3. Teaching and assessment

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Acceptable ↑	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

## 4. Curriculum

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum design and implementation	Acceptable ↑	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good ↑
Curriculum adaptation	Acceptable ↑	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Good	Good	Good	Good
Care and support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

## 6. Leadership and management

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



## 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.

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



Using this scale, the *Main inspection report* contains the judgments 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

### KG

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	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science	Acceptable ↑	Acceptable ↑

- In English, the reading, writing and speaking skills of most children in KG were appropriate for second language learners. There were no external examinations taken in this phase. In lessons and in their work, children's phonic skills were the strongest aspect of their English attainment. Children in KG 1 could say single sounds and match to objects, and those in KG 2 showed confidence in putting sounds together to make words. Children were poorer at using word skills to read and comprehend books and texts. Children were generally competent in forming letters and copying words and sentences, but lacked skills and confidence in constructing sentences. Children's progress in lessons was variable and weaker in reading and sentence formation.
- Most children in the KG attained standards in mathematics which were at expected levels. There were no external examinations of children's mathematical skills in this phase. In lessons and in their recent work, children in KG 1 showed growing confidence in counting accurately up to 10, pointing at each object as they counted and identifying the numeral. They traced and wrote numbers correctly but were not yet able to show that they understood conservation of numbers. Children in KG 2 showed developing understanding of addition and some of number bonds to ten. Number sense was stronger than understanding of measure and shape. Children's progress in lessons was largely acceptable. Their lack of English speaking skills prevented them from explaining their understanding of number operations and applying it to real life situations.
- Most children in the KG attained standards in the knowledge aspect of science which were at expected levels. There were no external examinations of children's science skills. In lessons, children in both KG1 and KG 2 showed that they understood the main parts of a plant and could point and name these on seedlings they had grown themselves. Most children in KG 2 could name the necessities for plant growth. Attainment in scientific skills of enquiry and investigation and critical thinking was weaker. Children's recent work in class showed that most had made appropriate progress in science. However, because they were at a very early stage of development in their English speaking and writing skills, they were unable to show the greater understanding or knowledge they might have gained.



### Elementary

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language	Good	Good
Arabic as an additional language	Not applicable	Not applicable
English	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science	Acceptable	Acceptable

- In Islamic education, the majority of students were working at levels that were above the national curriculum expectations. In lessons the majority made better than expected progress as measured against the learning objectives. The majority had a good understanding of Islamic concepts such as the Pillars of Islam and the Day of Judgment. Students had good understanding and appreciation of Islamic morals and values such as love to family members and cleanliness. Most students memorized short Surahs and their recitation skills and application of Tajweed rules were appropriate to their age. However, internal assessment processes did not produce reliable data to be used effectively to influence teaching and the curriculum to meet the learning needs of all groups of students and enhance their progress.
- In Arabic as a first language, recent attainment results in internal assessment were high but were not accurate enough to reflect students' performance robustly. The majority of students were performing at better than nationally expected levels in their listening and reading skills. Grade 5 students identified the main theme of a text or a poem. They gained the understanding of new difficult vocabulary well. Students made good progress in their understanding of different texts. They were developing their writing adequately through various writing tasks. However, speaking in standard Arabic was less secure. There were no significant differences in progress between boys and girls.
- Almost all students were learners of English as an additional language. While external assessment showed that attainment and progress of a minority of students were below international standards, most students made appropriate progress in lessons. In lessons as well as in their recent work, most students showed levels of knowledge and skills in line with curriculum standards. Listening and speaking were areas of strength. Writing and reading comprehension were two elements most needing improvement. Grade 1 students were able to summarize and sequence with accuracy and understanding. Grade 4 students wrote original stories based on the theme of international understanding, while those in Grade 5 created their own sketches. Most students made expected progress in lessons.
- Internal tests results in mathematics showed a better picture than was seen during lessons, where attainment was in line with Common Core standards. There were no difference between boys' and girls' attainment except in Grade 4, where girls were out-performing boys. Language development improved as the students progressed through the phase. Most students in Grade 1 could make groups of ten and the majority could count on from ten to 90 in tens with the teacher's support. By Grade 5, most boys and girls demonstrated an understanding of the lowest common denominators and multiples and were working towards finding equivalent fractions, with support. Problem solving was a weaker aspect, as was estimation. Progress in lessons was in line with curriculum expectations.

- Students demonstrated acceptable knowledge and understanding of concepts and made acceptable progress in science. In Grade 4, for example, students were able to name the elements of an electric circuit and used that information to build a closed one. Their external assessment data did not fully support their internal assessment information. Their progress in lessons was often hindered by teachers' poor use of scientific terminology which resulted in students acquiring misconceptions. Different groups of students did not make similar progress as differentiation to meet their various needs was not evident, and in the few instances it did exist, it was not sufficiently effective.

### Middle

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language	Not applicable	Not applicable
English	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science	Acceptable	Acceptable

- In lessons and in recent work, the majority of students were able to attain levels that were above national curriculum standards in Islamic education. Students also showed good progress in their understanding of the reasons behind the Islamic Fiqh-Laws and acts of worship such as Tayammum. They also had a good awareness of the meanings of prescribed Hadeeth and could give a brief summary about the narrators of the Hadeeth. Students showed good application of Tajweed rules in Qur'an recitation. In addition, assessment data was not reliable, so teachers had inadequate knowledge of students' individual needs and did not apply effective differentiation strategies nor provide appropriate levels of challenge to enhance students' progress.
- In Arabic as a first language, the most recent internal assessment results were not accurate and did not reflect the students' realistic attainment levels. According to internal assessment, attainment over time was generally high, however, the school data showed some regression over the years. Most students had adequate listening and reading skills. Most Grade 8 students were able to read and understand given texts demonstrating appropriate levels of comprehension of main ideas. Most students made adequate progress. They were developing their vocabulary well by finding the meaning of prescribed words on their own. However, their writing and standard Arabic speaking skills were less developed. Progress was inconsistent overall based on internal assessment.
- While students in English in the middle school generally performed at an acceptable level, their attainment and progress levels were inconsistent. Students' vocabulary skills were well developed as were speaking and listening skills. Reading and writing were less developed skill areas. While students in Grade 8 were able to identify the main idea of a given text, their basic critical thinking was barely evident. Grade 7 work indicated that students could cite textual evidence to support their analysis of the text. In some lessons, students were engaged in meaningful work, and made better progress, but overall progress was mostly acceptable due to insufficient challenge.

- Internal test results in mathematics showed a better picture than was seen during lessons, as attainment was in line with Common Core standards. There were no significant differences between boys' and girls' attainment. Attainment, this year, was not as high as in previous years because of revisions to the internal assessments. Most students in Grade 6 could match a number in positive exponential forms. By Grade 8, most could simplify and evaluate zero and negative exponents. Students were less successful with questions that were presented as a problem. Little evidence was seen of developing strategies to estimate or predict answers before computation took place. The majority of students were progressing in line with the expectations of the Common Core Standards.
- Students' attainment and progress in middle school science were acceptable. Students were able to acquire knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts in ways that were in line with curriculum expectations. In Grade 8, for example, students were able to calculate the speed of a walking person using the distance covered and the time spent. Students' external assessment results did not support the same level of attainment that their internal data did. Excessive focus on the mathematical aspect of scientific formulae was a hindrance to students' progress in developing deeper understanding of scientific concepts.

High		
Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language	Acceptable ↓	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language	Not applicable	Not applicable
English	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Good	Good

- In Islamic education, the attainment of the majority of students against national curriculum standards was good. Students also made better than expected progress in gaining knowledge, skills and understanding of Islamic manners, morals and values as measured against the learning objectives in lessons. Girls made better progress than boys in Holy Qur'an memorization and recitation skills, they followed the rules with varying degrees of accuracy. The majority of students could infer from the Holy Qur'an the Islamic laws and they could explain how to apply what they had learned to their own lives. However, teaching was not sufficiently effective to extend the higher-attaining students' knowledge and their research and investigation skills.
- Attainment results generated by the internal assessment of Arabic as a first language showed high levels; however these were not accurate when compared to actual achievements. Most students could apply some short story writing techniques, such as dialogue, description and narration, appropriately. Students' listening, and reading skills of short stories and poems were adequate. Many students used colloquial language when communicating with each other. Most students made adequate progress in their understanding of the main theme of a story or poem. However, their speaking in standard Arabic and writing skills were underdeveloped. Progress over time was inconsistent, being based too often on unreliable internal assessment.

- In English, the majority of students' performance in lessons and in their recent work indicated that attainment was above curriculum expectations. The majority of Grade 9 students incorporated sophisticated academic vocabulary into creative stories and Powerpoint presentations. Students' levels of comprehension and application of understanding was above expected level. However, students' pronunciation overall was heavily accented. Students' journals evidenced their critical thinking, and students' essays of global issues were original and well written. The majority of students made better than expected progress, especially at the upper end of the phase. The work of students with SEND was aligned with that of lower attaining students and the progress of most was parallel. Boys performed better than girls.
- Internal tests results in mathematics were at a much higher level than the attainment shown in lessons. However, as it had been over previous years, the majority were performing above the Common Core Standards. External results from SAT 1, with its logic-based word problems, were lower than the students' performance in lessons. There were no differences between boys' and girls' attainment. As the students approached the end of the phase the development of mathematical language was a high priority and was successful. Mathematics in this phase tended to be taught with less reference to its application and problem solving was a weaker aspect. Progress in lessons, for both boys and girls, was above curriculum expectations.
- In high school science, students demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. They consistently learned new ideas through active engagement in the learning process. In Grade 12, for example, students used learning technologies to simplify a complex electrical circuit in order to calculate its equivalent resistance. Students maintained similar levels of attainment over three years as their internal data indicated. They made good progress in lessons and over time. This was evident as they consistently developed their understanding and skills through scientific investigations.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

- Students had positive attitudes to their learning. However, in the elementary and lower middle grades, they were often very passive, being too dependent upon their teachers' directions. Most knew what they had learned but not necessarily how to improve further. At the top end of the school, students took more responsibility for their own learning and were clear about their next steps of progress.
- Students generally enjoyed opportunities to work together and could work well in groups when given the opportunity, sharing ideas and respecting each other's views. High school students were more skilled in this regard. Younger students and children in the KG frequently worked enthusiastically alongside each other rather than in tightly structured situations.
- Students showed limited skills in applying their learning to real life and in making cross-curricular connections. There were some significant examples of good practice, but generally opportunities were missed to help students to develop these skills. Teachers often introduced complex concepts in mathematics without reference to how and where they could be found and applied to the real world.
- Students in high school used technology and critical thinking more effectively than elsewhere. Other students showed limited use of technology, although some brought their own devices. Many classrooms had interactive whiteboards but these were seldom used by the students except in KG. Students' research skills were not extensive and were mainly limited to finding information online. Problem-solving was rarely well-developed.



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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal development	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Good

- Students' attitude towards learning was positive. They responded well to their teachers' feedback. They were also sensible and caring. They willingly provided help to their peers and students with special educational needs.
- Students demonstrated responsible behavior whenever they were under supervision. On some occasions when lessons failed to inspire students, students' behavior did not meet the expected levels. Children in the KG demonstrated very positive behavior. They contributed to their own learning by working harmoniously together.
- Across all phases, student-teacher relationships were respectful. The students were also aware of their differences and needs, and thus, maintained a good relationship between each other.
- Students were aware of healthy life styles. They were able to make healthy food choices. Students appreciated and acted upon advice given by medical staff about their diet and the need of exercising.
- The attendance of students was outstanding through all phases. They were generally punctual in arriving for lessons throughout the school day.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Outstanding

- Children and students, particularly in higher grades, had a clear appreciation of how Islamic values influenced Dubai. Senior students were committed to their prayers. They saw the Holy Qur'an as 'a way of life'.
- Students, especially those in high school, were very respectful of the heritage and culture of the Emirates. Elementary and middle phase students expressed how proud they felt being part of the UAE. Senior students talked with confidence about the differences between traditional and contemporary Dubai. Understanding of these areas was appropriately developed in KG.
- High school students demonstrated excellent understanding of their own culture. Students demonstrated this to a lesser extent in the middle and elementary phases. However, all students' knowledge of other world cultures was less secure, especially in KG.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Acceptable	Good	Good	Very good ↑

- Students understood their responsibilities as members of a school community. High school students took key roles, particularly those in the students' council. They played a leading part in charity campaigns for both Yemen and Syria, which involved elementary and middle students. The KG children did not have sufficient age-appropriate opportunities to take responsibilities.



- Most children and students enjoyed their work and were happy to be involved in activities but often lacked initiative. There were insufficient opportunities to develop their enterprise and entrepreneurship skills. Senior students were generally reliable, active participants and frequently led their own projects.
- Students cared for their school particularly in the high school. They were well aware of environmental issues such as global warming. The recycling club was very active and made visits to the children in KG to develop their understanding, and for example, to teach them how to make vases from empty bottles.

### 3. Teaching and assessment

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

- Most teachers had secure subject knowledge. They were able to explain the purpose of lessons clearly and check understanding. In KG, teachers understood that young children learn by doing, so planned active lessons with a high level of child participation. Teachers' subject knowledge was frequently at its best in high school where very clear explanations and accurate use of subject-specific language built well on prior learning.
- Teachers planned their lessons effectively. Classroom environments were generally supportive to learning and sometimes, particularly in English, were stimulating and dynamic. In KG, classrooms were colorful and inviting for young learners. Teachers managed their time and used resources effectively. However, in some subjects, particularly in Arabic, there was still over-reliance on the use of textbooks and worksheets as the main resources.
- Teachers' interactions with students usually engaged learners. Questioning in high school was frequently probing, encouraging considered responses. In lower phases, questions were frequently answered by choral responses which did not allow teachers to check individual understanding or for students to demonstrate more extended knowledge. Dialogue was frequently unchallenging and younger students did not engage often enough in meaningful discussions with others.
- Teaching strategies largely met the needs of students. Differentiation to provide greater challenge for the more-able students and appropriate tasks to support the learning of less-able students was only effective in the best lessons. High school teachers were more skilled in this respect. Often teachers were well aware of the prior knowledge of their students but did not use this sufficiently well to personalize learning.
- Most teachers were ineffective in developing higher order thinking skills, problem solving and innovation. In KG, children's independent learning skills were promoted in an active learning environment. In science in the upper grades and in some English teaching throughout the grades, critical thinking was more systematically developed. In elementary school mathematics, was focused on knowing mathematical practices and rules with little problem solving or investigational work.
- In Arabic as a first language, teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical understanding were adequate. Planning was suitable, referring to differentiation in general. Objectives were consistently focused on reading, understanding and vocabulary acquisition of pre-assigned words but not enough on developing speaking and writing. There was a heavy reliance on textbooks and worksheets. Questioning was developing higher-order thinking skills adequately, particularly in elementary school.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Assessment	Acceptable ↑	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

- Internal assessment processes were consistent across the school. In their assessment, teachers often made reference to curriculum standards and measured students' learning skills. However, in nearly all cases, the tests lacked rigor and challenge. Consequently, students appeared to be performing at higher levels than was found in lessons. It was not possible to use grade level tests to measure progress from one year to the next.
- The school benchmarked students' attainment and progress against a range of external expectations in the majority of curricular areas. Senior leaders were committed to the value of this data in order to moderate internal judgments. The process was in its early stages, and as yet, the data did not support the school in determining individual and group attainment and progress.
- School leaders analyzed performance data for different groups of students. The value of the analysis was dependent on the accuracy of the data produced by internal assessments. The analysis was not always effectively shared with curriculum leaders. The school had instigated a student tracking system but was at an early stage of using the data to determine further support or challenge to different groups of students.
- Assessment data was used effectively to evaluate gaps in learning or dips in attainment in KG. Elsewhere, the use of data to modify planning was inconsistent. In the best examples, teachers used prior assessments to modify groupings and activities. In these lessons, progress from students' starting points was more rapid. This analysis was more effectively used to modify aspects of the curriculum that needed improvement.
- Teachers' knowledge of students was more consistent in KG. Most teachers in the other phases had a general knowledge of students' academic and personal strengths and weaknesses. The school had made a good start in the development of students' self-assessment skills. Rubrics were used in many classes across the school and a system of gathering evidence into portfolios was developing. This was particularly strong in English.

#### 4. Curriculum

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum design and implementation	Acceptable ↑	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good ↑

- New school leadership worked to develop a focused and detailed curriculum to replace the previous more generic one. Former textbooks were replaced by 'Journeys', aligned with Common Core standards. Arabic as a first language was compliant with Ministry of Education requirements, strictly following the national document on the Arabic curriculum. Critical thinking, creativity and innovation were inconsistently developed and integrated into the curriculum across phases.
- Learning built well on previous knowledge. While there was continuity and progression in Arabic in developing reading, it was not clearly evident in speaking and writing. While students were generally prepared for transitions, there were issues in the KG to Grade 1 and the middle to high school transitions.

- KG's approach to independent learning provided opportunities for choice. In elementary and middle schools, student choice centered on individual options within lessons and in extra-curricular activities. A full AP course in calculus was added to the curriculum this year for both boys and girls. An English literature AP-based extension was also instituted for a small group of boys and girls
- While cross-curricular links were usually included in lesson plans, there was inconsistency in their integration into lessons. Some successful examples included elementary students' writing on the month theme and in the high school where students produced original videos based on social experiments. However, this was an area that needed development and clarity in guiding students to make the links and transfer knowledge between subjects.
- Reviews of the curriculum had begun to be more data-centered. The school had conducted a full review of the suitability of the curriculum in KG. As a result, immediate action was taken to ensure consistency of approach and adequate provision. In ongoing reviews of curriculum, leaders continued to analyze implementation of the new curriculum in classrooms and made adjustments as necessary.
- UAE social studies was taught formally from Grade 1 to Grade 9. Students met with their teachers at least once a week. Moreover, they learnt the subject through a project-based approach, interactive learning, and engagement. Therefore, this helped the students to build an awareness and understanding of the Islamic values and UAE heritage.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum adaptation	Acceptable ↑	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

- In all phases, lessons were differentiated for different levels. Students with SEND were almost always included with the low-achieving student groups when IEPs should have been the basis for differentiation. Gifted and talented students were not provided with enough challenging tasks and extensions of learning. In KG, there was inconsistent recognition of the different learning needs of children.
- Enrichment of the curriculum in KG had been improved. A broad range of extra-curricular activities, including Robotics, Writers Club, Toastmasters, Photography, Cooking, Holy Qur'an, and Recycling enhanced students' development. Links to the community were established through charitable, and other, activities, which widened student horizons. However, opportunities for student initiative and enterprise were limited. Innovation and creativity were areas to develop in deepening the extra-curricular program.
- Students had a solid understanding of UAE values, culture and society and that was mainly due to curriculum integration of these concepts into school programs. Islamic values had been incorporated into many lessons, and into original student work.
- The school was providing extensive Arabic in KG. Nine sessions were provided each of 45 minutes per week for all children in both KG 1 and 2. The main focus of teaching was on letters in different positions in a word, on short and long vowels and on words shapes and meanings.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Good	Good	Good	Good

- Effective systems and procedures generally existed for safeguarding students. Staff, students and parents were aware of child protection procedures as a result of workshops and training sessions. Students knew who to go to if they were worried about anything. Incidents of bullying were rare. The school provided guidance on how to use the internet safely.
- A secure environment was provided for staff and students. The school carried out risk assessments and evacuation of the buildings. These were regular but not always effective. Students were generally well supervised around school and systems for ensuring their safety on the school buses were effective. Congestion caused by parents' transport at the end of the school day posed a potential risk to students' safety.
- Buildings and equipment were well maintained in almost all instances. There were occasional lapses, for example, around the swimming pool area in KG where unused items of equipment were left around. The school's records were well organized and kept secure. Medical staff kept detailed records of students' health and of minor accidents and the actions taken to treat them. Medicines were stored appropriately.
- The premises and facilities in both buildings provided a safe and inclusive physical environment with ramps and lifts to provide easy access and mobility.
- The school's medical staff were very effective in promoting safe and healthy lifestyles. They were proactive in working with staff to influence the curriculum. They informed parents about the importance of healthy diets and were increasingly effective in supporting students to adopt a healthy life-style.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Care and support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

- Staff built very good rapport with their students. They interacted respectfully with them and provided care and support, including for those with SEND. There were clear and effective systems to manage behavior and this ensured that bullying was rare and handled well by staff and promoted students' better attitudes to learning, particularly in KG.
- The school's attendance systems and procedures were highly effective which led to outstanding attendance across all phases. Punctuality was also effectively managed which minimized the loss of contact time. However, the transition of few teachers between the boys' and the girls' sections during the school day presented a challenge to be on time for some lessons.
- The school welcomed students insofar as any additional needs could be met. There were appropriate systems in place to identify students with SEND. External professional agencies helped staff in making diagnoses and recommendations for support. There was still some misdiagnosis and some confusion about categories of need. The identification of gifted and talented students had improved significantly in recent months.



- Appropriate support was provided for students with SEND. In lessons teachers had clear and appropriate expectations for students which were matched to their abilities. They used resources effectively and modified the curriculum to reduce barriers to learning and to ensure students were successful and experienced a sense of achievement in their work. However, IEP targets were not sufficiently personalized and were often unrealistic.
- The school's priority for students was for their safety and for their social and emotional wellbeing. Students were aware of who they could go to if they had any concerns. Guidance and support for academic progress was inconsistent. A careers guidance counsellor had been recently appointed and was increasingly effective in advising and supporting students in their decisions about their future education and life careers.

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

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

Acceptable

- A new and experienced SENCO had been recently appointed and, together with the psychologist, SEND teachers, learning support assistants and counsellors, he had been successful in promoting an inclusive ethos and, to a degree, in raising the profile of students with SEND around the school. They had a vision for improvement. Their evaluation of the effectiveness of provision for students with SEND was inaccurate due to immaturity of newly introduced systems.
- Though trained, not all teachers clearly understood their role in implementing the vision for improvement in their lessons. Leaders had provided new resources to enhance learning for students with SEND.
- A significant amount of time had been spent in identifying students with SEND, according to the various categories with the support of a qualified professional outside of school. An inordinate number of students had been categorized as having SEND because of minor medical conditions which in themselves did not affect their learning. There was also a lack of clarity about the difference between learning difficulty categories.
- Parents were involved from the outset in identifying their child's needs and in supporting them at home. Parents were appreciative of the school's care, guidance and support. They had regular contact with the school to share information and to discuss issues and progress.
- Parents were generally satisfied with the quality of support and believed their children were making good progress. Written reports on their child's achievements did not provide sufficient detail about how well the students with SEND were doing and what they needed to do to improve.
- The curriculum was not sufficiently modified to meet the needs of students with SEND. In the best lessons, teachers delivered different activities and prepared worksheets according to the needs of each student. With specialist staff, they made good choices about the resources and asked questions designed to assess understanding and promote further thinking. In too many instances elsewhere, teachers had the same expectation for all students regardless of ability and need.
- The school's data on the progress of students with SEND was based on a comparison between diagnostic assessments and final examination results. This did not provide a valid measure of progress from day to day and over time and did not enable teachers or students to identify next steps in learning. In lessons and in their work, students with SEND made variable progress depending on the teachers' capacity to meet their needs. In a significant number of lessons, progress was acceptable or weak.



## 6. Leadership and management

### The effectiveness of leadership

Acceptable

- Senior leaders, incorporating the views of most stakeholders, had created a revised vision for the school. Leaders at all levels were committed to achieving the school's National Agenda targets through delivering a reviewed curriculum, raising the standards of teaching and learning and using external assessment to benchmark students' outcomes. The school admitted students' of all different levels of achievement including those with SEND.
- The principal along with the recently appointed senior leaders had clearly defined roles and responsibilities in leading the school. However, their impact on raising the quality of instruction and students' outcomes was still at infancy stage. Though there were some noted effective practices across most subjects and phases, these were inconsistent. This resulted in slow improvement in learning, particularly in the lower phases of the school.
- The school had established effective professional communication among all its staff members. Senior and middle management teams met regularly to plan for improvement, discuss implementation effectiveness and make decisions about professional development. However, the work overload of the newly appointed leaders hindered their effectiveness, particularly in ensuring the accountability of all the staff they were leading.
- Senior leaders exhibited clear understanding of the school's development needs and set appropriate initiatives that would help in improving performance; however, some middle leaders did not have the same level of awareness. The school focused on building capacity from within and extending the delegation of more responsibilities to some senior teaching staff, but that was still at a very early stage.
- Leaders had been partially successful in improving some aspects of school performance such as instructional leadership, provision in the KG and external assessment processes. The school leaders implemented required measures to ensure that the school met the statutory and regulatory requirements.

### School self-evaluation and improvement planning

Acceptable

- The revised process for school self-evaluation ensured the wide involvement of most stakeholders. Leaders had incorporated evidence from all departments across all the sections of the self-evaluation. Parents and students' views were also considered in relevant aspects of performance. However, the lack of accurate external assessment data had led to unrealistic views about students' levels of achievement. Most self-evaluation judgments were over-optimistic reflecting inaccuracies in measuring effectiveness.
- Senior and middle leaders shared responsibility in monitoring teaching and learning across the school. They performed formal and informal classroom observations and learning walks applying common criteria. Leaders had equal focus on the effectiveness of teaching and students' outcomes. They collected and analyzed the data about teachers' performance to track the progress. However, observation results reflected an inconsistent understanding of good quality teaching.

- The school produced a long-term strategic plan and departmental action plans. School plans were well structured, included clear actions and allocated responsibilities and resources. They mostly focused on developing provision and students' outcomes. Though leaders communicated clearly the school's major areas of development in its improvement plan, the time frame for achieving objectives was not stringent and success criteria were not stated.
- The school had been partially successful in addressing most of the previous inspection recommendations. The school had sustained an appropriate level of performance and managed to improve few aspects of provision, particularly in KG, and some of the social and personal outcomes. Though there were promising beginnings of improved processes and practices in certain areas such as SEND and assessment, these were still immature.

#### Partnerships with parents and the community

Good

- Parents were regularly involved in activities such as teaching sessions of specific topics, Tuesday Clubs, social campaigns and celebrations. Through the council, parents' voice was heard and their influence on some decisions was evident such as the latest renovations to the school libraries. The school administered several types of surveys and feedback. Leaders ensured that all parents were informed about school's priorities and its major actions.
- The school applied an open-door policy, and parents strongly believed that leaders and teachers were approachable and welcoming. Parents' night was held three times a year during which parents were provided with extensive details about their children's strengths and areas for improvement. Effective communication systems were established including technology.
- Reporting was an area that required further attention. Termly reports did not include any description of students' strengths and areas for development nor were comprised of comments on next steps in learning. Progress reports provided relatively better information about students' level of achievement against curriculum standards in core subjects, but neither showed progress overtime nor suggested ways for improving performance.
- The school provided ample opportunities for parents and students to be actively engaged in local and international social work. Many fundraising, environmental and health campaigns were arranged in collaboration with societal entities or launched by the community. These activities impacted positively on students' learning and their personal and social development. Less developed were the school's long-term partnerships with other educational entities.

#### Governance

Acceptable

- The school had two main boards: the board of owners and the advisory board. Both boards shared governance responsibilities. Combined, they comprised representatives from most school stakeholders and other community members with educational expertise. The boards met regularly to discuss reports about school's performance and students' results. They had good awareness of school priorities and major areas for development.
- Both boards monitored the leaders' effectiveness and the school's progress. The owners had been gradually minimizing their involvement in school management, thus allowing the leaders to be more autonomous and responsible for all their actions and results. There was still some overlap and lack of clarity of the owners' and leaders' roles which negatively influenced on ensuring full accountability.

- The boards had good impact on ensuring that the school was in the right direction for improvement. They contributed to the appointment of effective key staff and provided some resources to enrich the learning environment. They also ensured that school met all statutory requirements. The boards' impact on school development was positive but still not strongly evident, particularly on students' outcomes.




#### Management, staffing, facilities and resources

Acceptable

- Senior and middle leaders ensured that the school's day-to-day management was smooth most of the time. Extended lesson time improved learning; however, the timetable did not allow enough time between lessons, particularly when teachers and students moved between separate premises and after prayer time. Administrative and security staff implemented school routines and procedures effectively.
- The human resources department had succeeded in recruiting effective staff in key leadership positions and for newly introduced roles such as career guidance and special education. Teaching staff had appropriate subject credentials; however, only the majority held adequate teaching qualifications. A professional development program was provided based on a newly introduced performance management system.
- Premises and facilities were adequate and supported students' learning. The school had sufficient sporting and play grounds. Display spaces were abundant and there were enough storage rooms. The kindergarten children benefited from two new additions; the activity room and the outside classroom. Though almost all premises provided a safe learning environment; however, the swimming pools required more attention.
- The school had recently invested in enriching the technology resources for teaching and learning. Most classes had smart boards. Science laboratories had sufficient experimental materials and equipment. Though libraries were recently renovated, they did not have enough age-appropriate books to meet the needs of students. Resources to support special, practical, investigative and research learning were not sufficient. The art rooms were under-resourced and did not provide creative environment.

## 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 judgments. 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> 	2015-2016	46
	2014-2015	161
<b>Teachers</b> 	18	
<b>Students</b> 	29	

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

- Most parents and students, who responded to the survey, were satisfied with the quality of education in their school.
- Most parents, who responded to the survey, indicated that their children made good progress in all key subjects and developed a good range of learning skills.
- Most parents believed that their children developed good self-awareness and appreciation of other cultures. Most teachers and students agreed to this.
- The large majority of parents, who responded to the survey, believed that the school provided an appropriate range of resources including technology to support their children's learning.
- Most parents believed assessment, including marking of work by teachers, helped their children to improve.
- Most parents and almost all teachers believed the school offered students a good range of subjects and extra-curricular activities.
- The large majority of parents believed that the school prepared their children well for the next stage of learning and provided good career guidance.
- Almost all parents and all teachers believed students were safe at school.
- The large majority of students thought homework helped them learn and that most of their teachers were skilled and well qualified. They thought that comments, assessments and marking helped them improve.
- Although all teachers believed the school dealt well with any incidents of bullying, few parents expressed their concern about fighting and bullying in the school. All teachers believed that the school was led well.

- Few students made comments about the shortage in school activities and the low quality of school events such as the National Day celebration. They mentioned that the school listened to them but did not do enough in response.
- Few parents made comments about the weak quality of teaching in the school and the negative impact of the high teacher turn-over rate on it. They also mentioned that the school was not improving enough over time as it was unable to retain effective teachers.

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)