

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai International School - Al Garhoud

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

P.O. Box 500008, UAE, Tel: +971-4-3640000, Fax: +971-4-3640001, info@khda.gov.ae, www.khda.gov.ae

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai International School - Al Garhoud

Location	Al-Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dis.sch.ae
Telephone	04-2823513/2823524
Address	PO Box 15495, Al Garhoud, Dubai
Principal	Mr. Salah Sharara
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2,535
Number of Emirati students	1,188 (47%)
Date of the inspection	4th March to 8th March 2012

Contents

The context of the school	3
Overall school performance 2011-2012	3
How has the school progressed since the last inspection?.....	3
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	8
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	9
How well does the school protect and support students?	10
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	11
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?	13
What happens next?	14
How to contact us	14
Our work with schools	15

The context of the school

Located in Al Garhoud, Dubai International School is a private school providing education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Grade 12, aged three to 18 years. The school follows an American curriculum. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,535 students on roll. The student attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good. There were 1,188 Emirati students in the school. Thirty different nationalities were represented among the student population.

There were 95 full and part-time teachers, excluding the Principal and the senior leadership team. The Vice-Principal had only been in post for five months. Most teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. They were supported by a number of teaching and classroom assistants. At the time of the inspection, approximately 21 teachers or 22 per cent had been in the school for less than one year. Approximately 15 per cent of the students had also joined the school during that semester.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Dubai International School – Al Garhoud provided an acceptable quality of education. It had a number of strengths, which included students' good understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture. The quality of teaching for effective learning, students' learning and assessment were acceptable in all phases. The curriculum and the quality of support for students were also acceptable at all stages, but there was a lack of support within the curriculum and in lessons for students experiencing learning difficulties. Health and safety arrangements were good in all phases. Partnerships with parents and governance were also good. Leadership, self-evaluation and improvement planning, and management, including staffing, facilities and resources, were acceptable.

The school had made some progress towards addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report. Leaders had begun to introduce a more systematic approach to whole school improvement and ensuring the active involvement of leaders at all levels. They had improved safety from buses and traffic and in evacuation procedures. Whilst there were arrangements to share the best teaching

practice, there was still no common understanding of what constituted good and outstanding teaching and learning. Nevertheless, the school had an acceptable capacity to improve.

Key strengths

- Good progress in science at the upper stages due to increased opportunities for group and practical activities;
- A bi-lingual school which enabled students to attain good standards of English language competence by the upper stages;
- The strong respect for Islamic values and the high levels of interaction between students from a diverse range of cultures;
- Teachers and leaders who sought to improve and were responsive to advice;
- Engaged learners who were keen to be fully involved in the life of the school.

Recommendations

- Continue to raise attainment across all subjects;
- Develop students as leaders with increased opportunities to take responsibility;
- Improve the quality of teaching for effective learning so that students in all phases, especially those in Kindergarten, develop the skills to collaborate, use information and communications technology, think critically, find things out for themselves and apply their learning in new situations;
- Develop strategies for the accurate identification of students with special educational needs and ensure all teachers meet the needs of all learners in lessons;
- Increase the rigour of monitoring in all aspects of the school.

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

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

Attainment was broadly acceptable across all key subjects. In Islamic Education, most primary students showed good understanding of the Qur'anic verses. However, this was less well developed in later phases of the school. Most students across the school knew the Islamic concepts well, yet, reasoning skills remained weak in the higher stages. In Arabic as a first language, elementary students' language skills were above expectations. In the middle stage, students' listening, speaking and reading skills were in line

with expectations but their writing and grammar skills were underdeveloped. In the secondary stage, students' free reading and extended writing skills were weaker. In Arabic as an additional language, students' language skills were in line with curriculum expectations. In English, attainment in all phases apart from high school was consistent with expectations for learners of English as an additional language. High school students' attainment was above expectations in all aspects of English. Most students demonstrated effective speaking, listening and responding skills but reading skills were underdeveloped in Kindergarten and elementary. In mathematics, basic computational and data-handling skills were acceptable. At all stages, reasoning skills were less well developed. Similarly, in science, most students developed acceptable scientific knowledge but they had difficulty in applying their knowledge in unfamiliar situations. Whilst the majority of students in the upper stages had a developing theoretical understanding, investigative capacities were underdeveloped.

Progress ranged from acceptable to good across all subjects and stages in the school. It was good in the elementary phase in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language and in English at the higher stage. It was acceptable at all other levels and in all subjects. Progress for students with special educational needs was acceptable throughout the school.

Emirati students overall attainment and progress across all key subjects was in line with that of other students at all phases in the school.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

Positive behaviour was evident across the school. However, students in the middle school lacked self-discipline. There were good relationships between most students. Most respected their teachers. However, a few staff members were, at times, insensitive to students and used an inappropriate tone of voice. Across the school, students enjoyed work when they were given responsibilities and showed positive attitudes towards healthy living. However, a number made unhealthy food choices. Attendance was good although a significant number of students arrived late at the school. Across the school students had a clear understanding of Islamic values such as the importance of family and how Islam has impacted on society in Dubai. They could effectively explain traditions and heritage as well as the underpinning of key values, such as being generous to people and how local sports represent bravery. Students had a good appreciation of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai. They could explain clearly how it was a factor in Dubai's prosperity. Students were successful in creating harmonious relationships with peers from different cultures. Most students understood their responsibilities as members of a school community and a few took on key roles. However, insufficient numbers of students participated in internal and external school activities. Older students' were represented on the student's council. Most students cared for their school and local environment. Older students understood the need to protect local resources and many actively supported schemes promoting sustainability and conservation.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

Teaching was acceptable across the school. Most teachers demonstrated good understanding of their subjects. This was used effectively in lessons, most notably in science and in English in the upper grades, to develop students' knowledge and understanding. A majority of teachers did not fully understand how students learn. In the best lessons, learning objectives were made clear at the start of lessons and teachers used questioning well to evaluate and challenge students' learning. These teachers and students interacted well, promoting positive attitudes and meaningful dialogue. In a majority of lessons, however, teachers talked too much and did not use a sufficiently wide range of resources or strategies to engage learners effectively. A few teachers planned learning activities for different levels of ability, but most did not cater for the students' varying needs. Enquiry and critical thinking were underdeveloped in all phases, although they were developing features of a few lessons across most subjects. Information and communications technology (ICT) was not always used well by teachers to support learning. In Kindergarten, teaching was acceptable because teachers did not demonstrate a clear understanding of how best to promote the learning of young children. As a result, learning activities often lacked appropriate challenge. The quality of teaching in other subjects such as music, accounting, business and physical education was acceptable.

The majority of students had positive attitudes to learning. Students in the best lessons demonstrated good levels of independence and responsibility. They cooperated and collaborated productively to share ideas and opinions. They made connections to the real world using their own experiences. A majority could apply their understanding to different contexts. However, in most lessons interactions between students were very limited and discussions, critical, in-depth thinking and enquiry by learners was not evident. This was especially the case in Kindergarten. There was often too much passive learning in unchallenging settings. Most students did not use ICT effectively or regularly enough to support their understanding.

Assessment was acceptable at all stages. The school had initiated continuous assessment of students' progress in the key subjects. When available, data was well documented and analysed, with some key subjects identifying patterns of attainment and trends in progress of classes. The school had yet to identify individual student performance against agreed standards and therefore teachers were not able to identify next steps for students in their learning. Students were not told what they needed to do in order to improve. The school participated in international tests which offered valuable information on regional and international comparisons, but the school had yet to analysis this data. Teachers had a broad knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses, but they did not use that knowledge to either support or challenge students appropriately. Teachers had made some attempts to encourage students to evaluate their own and others' work, but the practice was in its early stages.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum across the school lacked a clear rationale; this was especially the case in Kindergarten and in English where the curriculum was more suited to first language learners. Transition arrangements were adequate apart from in Kindergarten to Grade 1 where students were unprepared for the challenges of reading and writing. French, music and art were included as additional opportunities in the Kindergarten and elementary classes. Whilst key subjects were adequately planned there was too great an emphasis on the use of textbooks and workbooks. The emphasis on direct teaching also meant that opportunities for children to independently apply their new learning independently inside and outside of the classroom were seldom available. The curriculum had been reviewed. It still did not meet the needs of all students. There was a lack of challenge across the curriculum in most subjects. Opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking were inconsistent features of the planned curriculum. Non-Muslim students had no structured educational programme during Islamic class periods. Limited enrichment activities include extracurricular classes in art, music, sports and French after school. Field trips, competitions, clubs and guest speakers were occasionally offered during the school day.

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

The school had good arrangements to protect and promote the health and safety of students. The daily arrival and departure of students was well organised. The building and grounds were well maintained and secure, and supervision of students by adults was generally effective. Emergency evacuation procedures were effective, and staff checked fire-fighting equipment regularly. Evacuation routes were not clearly signposted in every area. Staff who had specific responsibilities for health and safety carried out their duties efficiently. Healthy living was, on the whole, promoted well. Staff needed to continue to encourage some students to choose a healthy lifestyle. The doctor and nurses monitored students' health effectively and administered first aid and appropriate medicines as required. They ensured that students received helpful advice about healthy living and kept staff well informed about relevant health matters related to students. The child protection policy was being updated and discussed with staff and students.

The quality of support for students was acceptable at all phases. There was a high level of staff commitment to the well-being of students. Teachers knew the general needs of their students and relationships between them and the students were positive in almost all aspects. The special educational needs of some students were not always diagnosed or addressed effectively. A range of staff, including academic advisers and an adviser on post-school college destinations, supported students well by giving them advice in classes or individually. Staff did not work in partnership effectively with the parent body to ensure further improvement in student attendance and punctuality.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The quality of leadership and management was acceptable overall. The senior management team was hard working and committed to improvement. Working closely with the General Director, the Vice-Principal had begun to identify areas where improvement was required and had put in place strategies to begin to address these deficiencies. Together they had taken steps to empower middle leaders to have sufficient authority and autonomy to make the changes needed to move the school forward. However, they have not been wholly successful in this area as some staff did not fully understand how young people learned and what represented good teaching. These initiatives had resulted in some improvements to teaching and learning but were not consistently implemented or applied by all teachers.

Procedures for self-evaluation and improvement were at the early stages of development. These were being used to determine which aspects of the school's work needed to improve. Whilst still in the process of development, these reflective judgements were already becoming increasingly realistic. Performance management procedures were in place to evaluate teaching and learning and were being used to determine the effectiveness of the provision. These were not yet fully effective. The current improvement plan was well written and contained clear targets with achievable goals. There had been acceptable progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection.

Partnership with parents and the community were good. Parents spoke positively about the welcoming nature of the school and the frequent opportunities they had to consult with teachers. Annual questionnaires to parents allowed the school to gather their views and address any issues which arose. The school had a well-established system of reporting to parents. They were kept informed of their children's progress. However, the formal reports did not fully show strengths and improvement needs and as such restricted parent's opportunities to support their children. Links with the local community required further development.

The quality of governance was good and the school's partnership with the Board of Directors was a supportive one. The Board was heavily involved in policy design and strategic planning with regular ongoing meetings with the General Director. The Board contributed positively to the development of the school and held it to account for standards. The Mothers' Council continued to make a positive contribution to the governance of the school.

Weaknesses remained in the quality of management including staffing, facilities and resources. There were sufficient teachers, suitably qualified to cover all subjects and sections apart from in Kindergarten where current early year's expertise was lacking. Teaching assistants required further training in how to support students' learning effectively. The facilities were generally well maintained and clean. Access into and within the school premises was appropriate for all students. Kindergarten rooms were bright and stimulating. Sports facilities included a swimming pool, games pitches and games halls which were well utilised. However, the majority of rooms in the middle and high school and a few in the early stages were cramped and unattractive. There were insufficient ICT facilities to enable students to use the technology as an integral part of the learning process and existing resources were too limited to effectively promote independent learning. Often sports facilities were under-used.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

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

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	174	14%
	Last year	215	16%
Teachers	42		27%
Students	73		13%

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

A small proportion of parents, teachers and students responded to the questionnaire. Most parents who responded were happy with the quality of education their children were receiving. They felt the school kept their children safe and most felt their children were happy in their learning and were making good progress. A minority felt they would like to be more involved in the life of the school and a similar number thought that the range of subject options offered to their children was too narrow. Teachers thought they would benefit from more training and better and more frequent communication between managers and teachers. Students who responded wanted more after school activities. A minority felt that they would benefit from more detailed feedback from their teachers as to how they could improve their work.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:
inspection@khda.gov.ae

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

Copyright © 2012

This report is for internal use only and for the self-evaluation purposes of the school.
It should not be used for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement.