

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai International private School - BR

Report published in April, 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai International private School - BR

Location	Al Quoz
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dis.sch.ae
Telephone	04-3380370
Address	AlQouz - AlMeydan Street. P.O Box 125676
Principal	Dr. Akram Zayour
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18years KG1 – Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2162
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	1449
Date of the inspection	24th to 27th February

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The context of the school

Dubai International School branch, which is located in Al Quoz, is a private school for boys and girls aged from three to 18 years. Almost all students were of Arabic background, with Emirati students making up around two-thirds of the roll. The school followed a US curriculum. It had recently moved to the US Common Core State Standards in English and in mathematics, and the New Generation Standards for science. Other key subjects followed MoE guidelines. Students were mainly assessed using internal tests, and staff used a few external assessments for some students at various stages. A large number of students had taken the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) tests in English and mathematics in the current session. The school had 133 teachers, almost all of whom had appropriate higher education qualifications in their subjects. Twenty teachers were in their first year of teaching in the school.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Good

Key strengths

- Good attainment and progress across the school in Islamic Education, English and mathematics;
- The good quality of the learning environment and positive working relationships between students and teachers;
- Outstanding personal and social development of children in the Kindergarten;
- Effective partnerships with parents and external agencies to identify and meet the needs of students with special educational needs;
- The well organised and successful arrangements for promoting healthy lifestyles and ensuring the safety of students.

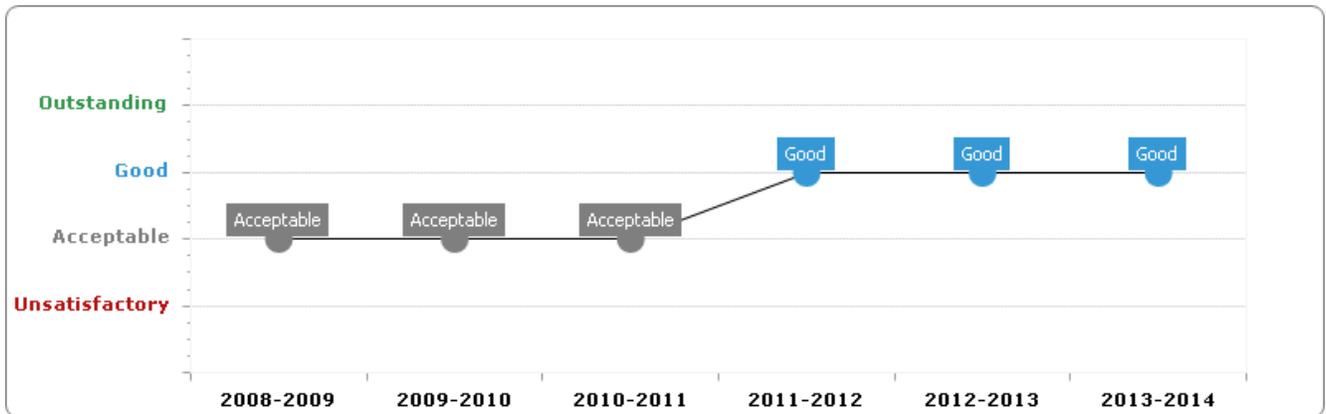
Recommendations

- Match learning tasks more closely to the needs of different groups of students with the aim of improving attainment, particularly in Arabic as an additional language and science;
- Give students and children more opportunities to explore and learn independently, to use ICT, and to develop critical thinking skills;
- Set out learning objectives more clearly, match a range of assessment approaches directly to the objectives, and use the assessment results more effectively to tell students what they need to do to improve their work;
- Use externally validated assessments to moderate the school's own assessments and to give staff, the students and their parents, a realistic view of students' attainment in an international context;
- Broaden the range of curriculum options for older students and modify the curriculum more effectively to meet the needs of groups of students, particularly those with special educational needs.

Progress since the last inspection

- Teachers had successfully raised students' attainment and progress in the elementary phase in English and mathematics.
- Staff had improved the behaviour of a minority of boys in the middle phase.
- Staff had expanded the range of teaching strategies to stimulate the learning of all students.
- There had been limited success in using assessment information more effectively to meet the needs of all students.
- Senior staff had implemented a more effective approach to school improvement by focusing on key aspects, including the quality of lessons.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was mainly good, although a few aspects were relatively weaker. In Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language, attainment was good across all phases. Most students had sufficient knowledge about Islamic concepts. They could explain key aspects of the Prophet Mohammed's life. Older students occasionally referred to the Qur'an and Hadith in explaining their understanding. Recitation skills varied widely across the school. In Arabic as a first language, the majority of students were above expectation in reading and in speaking. Their writing skills were mostly good. Most students learning Arabic as an additional language were able to recognise and speak a range of Arabic words and phrases and were able to read unfamiliar sentences aloud. Attainment in English and mathematics was good across all phases. Deeper reading comprehension and writing skills were underdeveloped. Most children commenced Kindergarten with little knowledge of English. By the end of the elementary phase, they had developed good listening and expressive capacities. By the end of the high school phase, most students read with expression and good understanding. Writing skills were underdeveloped in the middle phase. Students had good skills in mathematical calculation. Their skills in reasoning were weaker. Techniques in algebra and calculus were good in the high school phase. In science, factual knowledge was strong in all phases, but enquiry skills were underdeveloped, particularly at the elementary and middle phases.

Progress followed a similar pattern to attainment. In Islamic Education, students made good progress in researching and learning independently. Progress in recitation and memorisation skills was less strong. Students of Arabic as a first language made good progress, less so in the middle phase. Girls made better progress than boys. In Arabic as an additional language, students' listening and responding skills were developing well, but progress in reading and writing was slower. In English, children in Kindergarten made outstanding progress in first steps in English. Progress at other phases in talking, listening and reading was good. Progress in writing was less good, particularly in the middle phase. Students made good progress in mathematics, particularly in applying techniques in real life contexts. Progress in problem solving was less good. In science, children in Kindergarten and students at the high school phase made good progress in practical activities. Progress in the elementary and middle phases in planning investigations was acceptable.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning skills was good in Kindergarten, elementary and high school, and acceptable in the middle phase. Kindergarten children were able to develop their natural curiosity as they investigated caterpillars and butterflies. Children and students were enthusiastic learners, and older students were able to take responsibility for their own learning. They shared their learning effectively through discussions and

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presentations. Learning was particularly good when students were working on practical activities and problems which related to the real world. Students' participation in group work had a positive impact on learning as they supported each other. Students throughout the school had little awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, and consequently did not know what they needed to do to improve their academic work. Kindergarten children used smartboards with confidence but, overall, there were few opportunities for students in the rest of the school to use ICT to support their learning. Critical thinking was undeveloped, particularly in the middle phase.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Personal responsibility was outstanding in the Kindergarten and good in the other phases. Children in Kindergarten showed excellent maturity for their age. Almost all students were respectful towards other students and adults. Most students chose to eat healthy food. They responded well to opportunities for physical exercise. Some showed outstanding prowess in sports such as basketball and swimming. Attendance was mainly good, and outstanding at the middle phase but a minority of boys in the middle phase did not arrive punctually for the start of assembly.

Students' understanding of Islamic values, and local and global awareness, was outstanding in Kindergarten and good at the other phases. Students had an awareness of values such as tolerance and respect for oneself and others. Students of different cultural backgrounds felt welcome in the school. Students were able to describe the history of Dubai and identify historical and cultural features. Understanding of wider world cultures was less well developed.

Community and environmental responsibility was outstanding at Kindergarten and good elsewhere. Children in Kindergarten responded well to encouragement to look after their immediate environment. Students participated in community, conservation and enterprise activities. They showed initiative, had a strong work ethic and participated in activities which had a social and environmental focus, including visiting people in special needs centres. They helped to maintain the school garden, and undertook recycling initiatives in the school and in the community. Students in high school showed a generally good understanding of environmental issues.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was acceptable in the middle phase and good at the Kindergarten, elementary and high school phases. The positive rapport between teachers and students ensured a productive learning environment in almost all classes. Teachers had good subject knowledge, and used it well to explain matters to students. Teachers used questioning well to engage students and probe their understanding of concepts. They had high expectations for students' achievement. In the best lessons there was challenge, lively pace and opportunities for independent learning. Teachers planned lessons well and made the purpose of activities clear. On occasion, they did not cover their planned objectives fully, nor summarise at the end of the lesson. They used tasks and resources well to promote interest and stimulate thinking. While many teachers frequently supplemented textbooks with practical activities and worksheets, they did not always relate these tasks to real life contexts. They did not use information and communication technology fully or match tasks to the learning needs of different groups of students. Teaching in English was a particular strength of the school. Physical education lessons successfully developed students' fitness and skills in a range of sports.

Assessment was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable at the other stages. Teachers in Kindergarten identified and recorded children's progress accurately. In most lessons, teachers knew their students' strengths and weaknesses adequately and provided oral feedback on how well the students were doing. In almost all instances, teachers marked students' work, but they seldom gave helpful written feedback on how students might improve their work. Teachers regularly tested their students and collected information on their performance. The data helped teachers to draw up a general record of the attainment of individual students. It was less useful for monitoring progress, and teachers did not match it to international benchmarks of attainment. When given the opportunity, older students were accurate in assessing their own learning and that of others. Nevertheless, teachers did not use assessment information consistently to plan varied strategies for teaching different groups of students.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good in all phases. Staff reviewed the school curriculum systematically each year as part of a whole-school five-year cycle. Staff matched the Arabic, Islamic Education and social studies programmes well to MoE guidance. As part of the outcomes of review, the school had adopted Common Core States Standards in the previous year in English and mathematics. The school had introduced New Generation Science Standards. Although these new programmes were not fully in place, staff had benefitted from the professional development activities. Transition arrangements between phases were effective. Staff recognised the importance of cross-curricular links and meaningful opportunities for independent learning,

research, and critical thinking but did not make these opportunities available fully in all subject areas. Staff used extra-curricular and community links well to enhance learning opportunities at all phases.

The design of the curriculum to meet students' needs was good in Kindergarten and acceptable in the other phases. In the best lessons, and particularly in Kindergarten, staff modified the curriculum thoughtfully to ensure that all students, including those with SEN, had the opportunity to engage in relevant and meaningful learning. However, they did not modify the curriculum consistently well. Consequently, in a minority of lessons, the progress of higher and lower attaining students was too slow. Curricular options for older students were limited and did not reflect the talents, needs or aspirations of a significant minority of students.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for health and safety across the school were outstanding. Staff provided high quality supervision of students within the school and on school transport, particularly for Kindergarten children. The school premises were well maintained, clean, and secure. Staff organised the well-resourced school clinic efficiently. All teachers received a formal training in the school's child protection policy and were aware of the policy and procedures. Many staff had undertaken first aid training from the Red Crescent. Staff monitored fire equipment, evacuation drills, and other safety equipment consistently. Staff promoted healthy lifestyles well.

The quality of support was outstanding in the Kindergarten and good in all other phases. The relationships between and among staff and students were very positive. As a result, there was a positive climate of mutual support within classrooms. Strong links with parents and external professionals supported the school's effective systems for monitoring the progress of students with special educational needs. These systems were particularly strong and effective in the Kindergarten. There was greater variation in the quality of support for students with special gifts and talents. Staff implemented well developed systems to monitor the wellbeing of students. Many students expressed their appreciation for the very effective support and guidance provided by the careers and guidance counsellor, who had an innovative and caring approach. Rigorous and systematic systems promoted good levels of attendance and punctuality.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

All aspects of leadership were good. Senior staff reviewed the school's vision and values regularly and ensured that all staff understood what was expected of them. Staff and parents respected the principal. Staff at other levels, including heads of department, responded well to the opportunities they had to show leadership. Teamwork was a positive feature of the school's leadership. Staff had been successful in improving some aspects of outcomes for students and in maintaining the overall good quality of education. They had a good capacity for further improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Staff carried out a wide range of processes to gather data and information on the school's work. Senior staff worked with those at other levels to carry out learning walks, in which they surveyed a range of lessons and noted positive and negative features of teaching and learning activities. They used the information well to identify weaknesses and organise professional development training for teachers. The principal organised many surveys of stakeholder views but did not always analyse or use the extensive range of data fully effectively. He ensured that staff implemented the school improvement plan systematically.

Links with parents and the community were good. Parents benefited from good opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school, for example as storytellers in Kindergarten or by addressing assemblies. The mothers' council provided a forum for parents to express their views. Communication was positive. Staff sent three reports each year to parents on their children's attainment. However, the reports did not set out students' next steps in learning clearly. A range of community links helped students to broaden their horizons.

Governance was good. The governing board included parent and staff members. It supported the school well and took the views of stakeholders into account. The board had a general view of the school's strengths and aspects in need of improvement. It had helped senior staff to maintain good standards.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources was good. Staff managed the day-to-day running of the school well. Teachers had suitable qualifications and teaching experience. The number of new teachers was relatively low. Teaching assistants were well qualified and supported learning activities well. The premises, learning environment and resources were of good quality. The supply of modern literature texts in the library was too narrow.

[View judgements](#)

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

A well-qualified specialist team led and implemented a fully inclusive Special Educational Needs and Inclusion policy. Leadership of the provision for special educational needs was good. Staff had designed the well-resourced SEN unit in a thoughtful manner. The well qualified team had an ambitious vision for their department, including some innovative plans for improvement. Key steps within the development process included a restructuring of roles and responsibilities to ensure that the capacity to improve continued to develop. Systems for tracking and monitoring the progress of students with special educational needs were effective and systematic. However, teachers did not always use the wide range of information about students' attainment scores sufficiently well to target specific support. Where the school had developed partnerships with external specialists, high quality advice and guidance often resulted in good or better teaching, support and student progress. Nevertheless, support was not always as effective for students with special gifts or talents. Resources were generally appropriate and, in the best lessons, teachers made good use of them to promote more efficient and independent learning.

How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?

The school's programme for Arabic as a first language followed MoE requirements. Children in Kindergarten studied Arabic as a first language. The school provided two periods monthly in the library for extra reading. A majority of lessons in all phases included effective ICT presentations to enrich the content of the lessons. Teachers occasionally differentiated tasks for different groups of students. Cross-curricular links existed but teachers did not always plan them well. Opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking were inconsistent. Staff were working to enhance the curriculum by encouraging students to research and carry out projects.

Almost all teachers set out clear learning objectives, but their expectations of what students might achieve were at times inaccurate. Almost all teachers had strong subject knowledge. The work they gave to students was generally in line with curriculum standards although, in a few grades, targets for students were lower than required. Most teachers used ICT presentations. Only a minority of the teachers encouraged students to make presentations or learn through role-play. Teachers rarely adopted approaches to develop higher order thinking skills among students and a few teachers lacked enthusiasm, and used a narrow range of teaching strategies.

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	216	20%
	Last year	173	18%
Teachers	42		32%
Students	324		92%

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

Almost all eligible students, around one-third of teachers and roughly one-fifth of parents completed the questionnaire. Most parents and students who responded were satisfied with the overall quality of education. Most parents felt that their children were making progress in the key subjects and were enjoying school life, and almost all thought that their children were safe in the school. A majority had positive views on various aspects of the curriculum, including assessment. While most thought that the school was well led, only a smaller proportion felt that leaders listened to their opinions. A majority of students were not satisfied with the range of curriculum aspects, including extra-curricular activities and use of technology. Most teachers felt that they were involved in school self-evaluation, review and improvement activities. They had positive views about leadership and thought that professional development activities, including work on supporting students with SEN, helped them.

What happens next?

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

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

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

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

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