

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Shurooq Private School

Report published in April 2014

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي
Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Shurooq Private School

Location	Jumeirah First
Type of school	Private
Website	www.ashorouq.ae
Telephone	04-3440765
Address	P O Box 11656, Dubai
Principal	Fadwa Amin Hattab, فدوى خطاب
Curriculum	MoE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2127
Largest nationality group of students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	800 (38%)
Date of the inspection	20th to 23rd January 2014

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The context of the school

Located in Jumeirah 1, Al Shurooq Private School is a long-established private school providing education for 2,127 students aged three to 18 years of age, from Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12. Thirty eight per cent of the students were Emirati, while almost all of the remainder were Arab expatriates. The school had identified 18 students with a special educational need. They had either a general or specific learning difficulty. All classes from Kindergarten to Grade 4 were of mixed gender. Boys and girls were in segregated classes from Grade 5. The Kindergarten children made up 20 per cent of the school roll. Primary students (Cycle 1) made up about 36 per cent; middle and secondary students (Cycles 2 and 3) made up about 44 per cent.

Arabic was the main language of instruction. The school followed the UAE Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum with students completing MoE tests on a termly basis from Grade 6 to Grade 12. Most assessment information was generated from regular internal testing supported by teachers' observations.

The school had 146 teachers, 129 of whom were qualified, plus 7 teaching assistants. In almost all classes in Kindergarten, class sizes were above the recommended number of 25 children.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The good attainment and progress in Islamic Education in all phases, Arabic in Cycle 1, mathematics in Cycle 3 and progress in science in Cycle 3;
- The good attitudes and behaviour of students in all phases and their good understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness;
- The good provision for health and safety in all phases;
- The improved school self-evaluation, improvement planning and staff performance management;
- The good engagement of parents and the school's established links with the community.

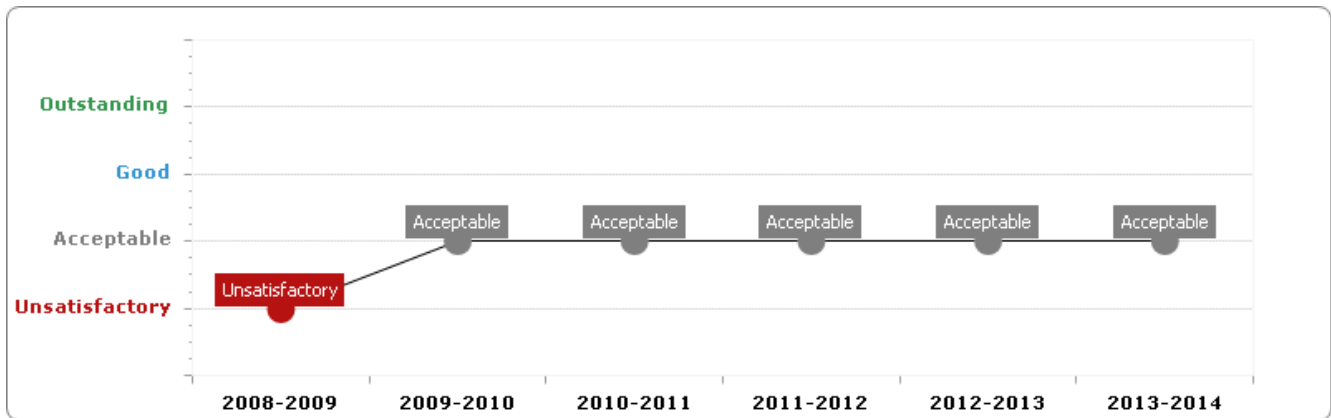
Recommendations

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all in senior leadership positions to support more sharply targeted, effective improvement.
- Improve progress in almost all key subjects and phases by ensuring that lessons have high levels of student participation and increased challenge.
- Train teachers to construct meaningful experiences to meet the learning needs of all students better.
- Develop assessment to ensure that results can be used effectively by teachers to improve their lesson planning and to monitor and track students' progress;
- Improve all aspects of the identification and provision for students with a special educational need.

Progress since the last inspection

- Improvement in provision in English in the Kindergarten had resulted in acceptable progress.
- The school had strengthened its self-evaluation and improvement planning as well as its monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- The Vice-Principal and the Board of Governors were pursuing ambitious aims for the school including enhanced learning outcomes in all phases.
- Class sizes remained overly large in the Kindergarten and this affected the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Trend of overall performance



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

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

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[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

In Islamic Education, attainment was good in all phases. A majority of students were able to memorise prescribed Surahs. Most had knowledge of Ibadat such as Hajj and prayer. In addition, they had knowledge of new Islamic matters and Prophet Mohammad Seerahs. Attainment in Arabic was acceptable, except in Cycle 1 where it was good. In Kindergarten, most children read and wrote letters. A majority of Cycle 1 students followed long text in standard language. In Cycle 3, reading and writing skills were still developing. Attainment was mostly acceptable in the other subjects; Kindergarten English was unsatisfactory and Cycle 3 mathematics was good. In English, lower phase students developed acceptable speaking skills and older students in Cycles 2 and 3 were able to make effective presentations to their class on research they had undertaken. Reading and writing skills were less well developed. In mathematics, the school's results in national exams compared favourably to other MoE schools. Students acquired useful skills in applying mathematics. In science, lower phase students developed key concepts about the world. However, their application and development of skills were underdeveloped. Cycle 3 students were developing their knowledge, skills and understanding in practical contexts.

Progress mirrored attainment exactly except for acceptable progress in English in the Kindergarten and good progress in Cycle 3 science. In Islamic Education, a majority of students in all phases made good progress in memorising the Qur'an. They had developed a good knowledge of prayer and Prophet Mohammad Seerahs. In Arabic, most Kindergarten children improved their reading and writing of a few Arabic letters. In Cycle 3, reading and writing skills were underdeveloped. In English, speaking and listening skills were developed consistently and progress in writing skills were gradually improving in Cycles 1 to 3. In Kindergarten a new system of recognising letters and blending sounds had led to improvement in both reading and writing simple words. Students in mathematics in the upper classes were able to make links between subject areas and were increasingly competent in applying their skills to handle procedural mathematics successfully. Progress over three years for all year levels showed that students had maintained at least an acceptable standard. In science, progress in skills development was restricted because children had restricted opportunities to explore, investigate, question and discover their world. In Cycle 3, students had developed a good grasp of subject specific content and had increased their skills of application and reasoning.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of learning skills was acceptable in all phases except in Cycle 3 where it was good. Almost all students engaged well in their learning, showed interest and were attentive. When provided opportunities, particularly in the senior school, they were active learners and could take responsibility. Students generally knew what they had learned and what they needed to improve, but were not always aware of how to do it. They enjoyed group work, but specific roles were rarely designated nor were expectations set high enough to encourage greater contributions to a higher level of learning. Students acquired basic skills well but their ability to apply their learning to real-life contexts and make connections across other subjects was limited, though improving. Another improvement was their ability to evaluate and think critically. Good examples were seen of the use of enquiry and critical learning skills, but these were mainly in Cycle 3. In other cycles, students acquired these skills inconsistently, there was insufficient independent learning and they relied too much on teachers. Research was mainly completed as homework, which limited effectiveness.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility was good. Across all phases, students' behaviour was good and they had very positive attitudes to school and to learning. There was a collective enthusiasm, with pride and enjoyment evident. Their behaviour was overwhelmingly responsible; students were courteous to each other and respectful to adults. Most were self-disciplined, considerate and showed a sensitivity to others both in class and in school activities such as assemblies, productions and class presentations. Younger children were supported well by older students. Across the school, most students were aware of the requirements for healthy living and usually opted for healthy snacks. Attendance across the school was good overall. Punctuality to lessons and at the start of the school day was acceptable.

Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness was good across all phases. Most students appreciated the expectations of an Islamic society. During assemblies, they exhibited a pride in their school and in key aspects of UAE heritage and Islamic culture. Across the school, students had a reasonable knowledge of how the heritage of UAE influences life in Dubai. They had a growing grasp of the differences between the diverse nationalities living in Dubai and how respect and appreciation are cornerstones of Dubai society. They confidently gave examples of their own cultures and traditions, but their understanding of international cultures and traditions was not broad enough.

Students' community and environmental responsibility was acceptable across the school. Students cared for their school and helped monitor cleanliness and behaviour. A number of students gave well-planned

presentations to groups of classes. The opinions of student council members had influenced some school decisions affecting students. Volunteers contributed to the community through fund-raising for charity projects, cleaning of a local beach and visiting the elderly. Students understood the need for environmental protection and engaged in recycling projects. They had helped to 'green' the school by planting trees and shrubs.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching for effective learning was good in Cycle 3 and acceptable elsewhere. Most teachers were confident and had an adequate subject knowledge, although this was stronger in mathematics and Islamic Education in Cycles 2 and 3. Teachers generally engaged students but modelling of good oral language was variable, especially in English. Teachers used an effective common format to plan lessons and included learning objectives, but rarely planned imaginatively. A minority took into account students' different ability levels and supported these mainly using worksheets. Except in Cycle 3, teaching rarely provided learning activities to challenge students sufficiently. A good range of resources was available to support learning, but there was inconsistent use across the school. Some good use of information and communication technology (ICT) in English and Arabic was not replicated elsewhere. In Cycle 3, interactions between students and teachers were effective and were often dynamic in mathematics. Across the school, too many lessons were teacher-dominated and involved narrow questioning. In Islamic Education and science, teachers encouraged some higher order thinking but did not provide enough opportunities for critical enquiry and investigative skills in other subjects. In Kindergarten, teachers seldom interested or motivated children by asking a range of open-ended questions. Too few opportunities were provided for children to engage in purposeful imaginative activity or interact with materials and the physical environment.

Assessment was acceptable across the school. Annual diagnostic testing across the school provided a significant insight into each student's strengths and weaknesses. Appropriate systems were in place and enabled the school to regularly monitor students' attainment and progress in the key subjects and discern patterns. The monitoring, however, was not analytical or secure enough. Teachers only made acceptable use of data to plan lessons, modify the curriculum and provide support. Groups, such as high and low achievers, were not tracked and the school's benchmarking did not always reflect the levels of challenge expected in an international context. Teachers' plans targeted improvement in the core skills where weaknesses were identified. However, there was significant variation in practice across the school. In Islamic Education, there was limited use of assessment data in teaching, curriculum and student support. In Kindergarten, the use of a variety of methods to record children's holistic development and the regular sharing of information on children's learning and development with parents were in their early stages. In English, teachers typically

did not sufficiently check understanding by students who had weak skills. Islamic Education teachers used various assessment strategies but provided limited feedback to students. Teachers occasionally involved students in the evaluation of their own learning, but less frequently in that of their peers.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was acceptable across all phases. It closely followed that of the Ministry of Education course books with occasional extensions. In the Kindergarten, improvements included the introduction of a comprehensive phonics programme. Subject co-ordinators in most subjects had reviewed the curriculum in the light of assessment data on students' progress. Planning supported transitions across cycles but prepared students inconsistently for future employment or graduate studies. Cross-curricular links were underdeveloped. Some teachers made good use of real-life examples, especially in English and science lessons. Some improvements had been made in planning for enquiry in science, but overall the curriculum did not sufficiently emphasise critical thinking and investigative skills.

The quality of the curriculum to meet the individual needs of students was unsatisfactory across all phases. It was not consistently adapted to provide work for students with special educational needs that supported and helped improve their attainment. Work was not planned to give sufficient challenge to students of higher ability to accelerate their progress. In a number of subjects such as English, science and mathematics new, more interesting topics had been introduced to make learning more interesting. However, the overall range of subjects available for students was limited and there was too little choice for them to explore subjects that met their future career aspirations or interests.

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were good across the school. Effective security arrangements were in place and members of staff throughout the school took their duty of care seriously. Clear expectations and well-rehearsed routines throughout the day and on the school buses ensured students were safe. However, students' exit procedures and the management of parents' vehicles during the after-school pick-up were not efficient enough. School premises were clean and tidy, and equipment was maintained in good condition. Fire drills and emergency evacuation procedures were carried out at appropriate intervals. Medical staff kept full records. The school successfully promoted healthy living. Food served in the canteen reflected the school's healthy living policy. Staff received regular training on child protection arrangements. Students felt safe in school and social workers sensitively supported any students facing difficulty.

The quality of support was acceptable in all phases of the school. Good relationships between staff and students were based on mutual respect and contributed to the caring ethos of the school. There were efficient systems to promote regular and prompt attendance of students and where problems were identified there was good liaison between home and school. The procedures to identify students with special educational needs were unsatisfactory. Some students with a special educational need were not identified or their support was not efficiently managed because of duplication of roles and responsibilities of staff. Similarly, the majority of lessons did not provide sufficient challenge to promote the effective development of students who were gifted and talented. Students were confident to seek help and advice when needed for a range of personal matters. Older students had a limited range of advice and information about their life beyond school.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. The school was acceptably led by the Vice-Principal, supported by a range of middle managers. He had effectively co-ordinated the redevelopment of the school's mission and vision statements, which now emphasised more aspirational goals. Staff, students, parents and the Board had participated in the development of this new direction. The school had achieved some initial success in its improvement of aspects of its vision. Through stronger self-evaluation, there was a greater clarity of strengths and areas for improvement. Clear roles supported those with delegated responsibilities. Most middle leaders were committed to the strong school ethos and to improvement and were developing an awareness of what they needed to do to play their part. Professional relationships including regular communication were in place. Meetings were regular and agendas were fully focused on school improvement. There was a growing capacity at all levels to make the necessary improvements. This was being supported by regular professional development, visits to other schools and meetings with and support from key staff from other schools. There was not enough urgency to clarify and resolve the role of principal.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Self-evaluation processes had been strengthened throughout the school. In all key areas, staff analysed their data and presented reasonably realistic views of key aspects of their work; however, occasionally, data suffered from a lack of validity and reliability. This resulted in an over-optimistic view particularly when benchmarked against international standards. In general, self-evaluation provided a picture of what the school needed to improve. A new school improvement planning model, based upon a 'Plan, Do, Study, Act' cycle, had been introduced. The plans prescribed actions and goals but lacked sharp focus. The school struggled to determine appropriate pathways to follow to meet its improvement goals. Improved performance management arrangements, with a strong focus on students' learning outcomes, were in place. Evaluation included comments on areas for development but did not yet include possible steps that individual teachers could make to improve. The

school had yet to use the results to identify overall patterns or teachers' individual needs for professional development. The school had responded positively to the last DSIB inspection recommendations and had made variable progress in meeting them. Of concern was the overall lack of progress in identifying and meeting the learning needs of SEN students.

Relationships with parents and the community were good. Parents expressed a positive view of the school. There was an active and functional Parents Council, with some members regularly attending school to support directly students' learning in lessons and students' presentations, activities or communication with the student council. The school regularly surveyed parents to obtain their views of a range of important developmental issues. It provided regular and informative school reports. Parents were affirming of the promptness of communication using the web, SMS and the new more detailed web-based information system. The school continued to maintain its strong established links within its wider community.

Governance was acceptable. It included representation from a range of stakeholders. Governors had an active presence in the school, being involved in the school's strategic and improvement planning, in monitoring the improvements, in meeting with teachers, students and parents, and in visiting classes. They had supported the purchase of new resources including the phonics resources recently acquired for the Kindergarten. They were increasingly holding the school to account for its actions but they had yet to ensure that it was developing quickly enough.

Management, including staffing facilities and resources, was acceptable. The school's day-to-day management was generally effective and efficient. Students were adequately cared for in a safe and secure environment. A significant number of teachers were new to the school and while most were academically qualified, more than a few were not yet skilled enough to ensure that all students had their learning needs met. Weaknesses in understanding appropriate provision for Kindergarten children was apparent in a number of Kindergarten teachers. Most classes in Kindergarten had numbers in excess of the recommended 25, which led to overcrowding. The school had invested in phonics programmes and resources for the Kindergarten which had supported some improvement in progress in English. A number of classrooms throughout the school were small and did not present a conducive learning environment. Included was the library which was small, unattractive and did not contain sufficient English novels to encourage students to read for pleasure.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

In all key subjects, the attainment and progress of Emirati students was generally in line with those of other students and was mostly acceptable. This was not the case in Grades 8 and 9 where the performance of

Emirati boys in mathematics was around 10 per cent lower, and in Grade 11 where Emirati boys outperformed non-Emiratis and were the driving force in the class and in the mathematics Olympiad. Emiratis were engaged in their science classes in chemistry, physics, biology and geology but their progress was variable. Those who were identified by the school as low achievers struggled, particularly with higher order thinking. Conversely, high achievers made better than expected progress and used their strong knowledge when solving problems and when reasoning. Overall, most made acceptable progress in the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding. Progress in English in Cycles 1 to 3 was typically in the acceptable range and, for a few, it was unsatisfactory. A feature of the Emirati students was their positive attitude to learning, although some tended to be reluctant participants in class discussions and struggled to answer questions in English. In Arabic, most were attaining at similar levels and making similar progress to other students. The school tracked Emirati students and recorded their achievements in detail for the different subjects, however it did not set specific learning targets for them.

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

The provision for special educational needs was unsatisfactory. The recommendation from the previous inspection report had not been met. The identification of students with special educational needs was inconsistent and ineffective. Management responsibilities were complex and not well co-ordinated which led to insufficient continuity of care of students. Some students with special educational needs were identified by subject staff and their care managed exclusively within subject departments. Staff training had been initiated, but only a few lessons provided the necessary support for these students. The needs of some students were not communicated to teachers and so work was not planned to meet their needs and promote better progress from them for their academic work. There was no policy for special educational needs to set out clear guidance for staff. The use of assessment information based on examination success and a diagnostic test, was used throughout the school to identify those in need of additional support. Only in Cycle 1 was there any specialist assessment of students causing concern, to more accurately identify their needs and prepare a programme of study for them. The progress of many students with learning needs was unclear and only based upon their current academic performance, rather than on their development over time. The monitoring of their performance overall was inconsistent and did not reach an acceptable level.

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

Provision in Arabic in Kindergarten and Cycles 2 and 3 were adequate but was stronger in Cycle 1. In most lessons, teachers' subject knowledge was secure particularly in Cycle 1. In all phases, lesson plans had clear objectives which were shared with students. Resources used included ICT, flashcards, models, boards and textbooks as well as activity sheets. In most lessons, teachers' questions were varied enough to result in

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active and effective teacher-student interactions. There were few examples of closed questions, particularly in Cycle 1. This allowed students to make better progress there than in other cycles. In most lessons, teachers did not set high enough expectations. Some teachers differentiated work but this was inconsistent across all cycles. The curriculum was broad and balanced overall, but there was still a need to raise expectations. Transition stages between the different grades were adequate. The curriculum was not adequately reviewed annually to ensure it was meeting the needs of all students. Cross-curricular links were used in lessons. The school had developed an extra handbook for support of student's handwriting skills and grammar. There were limited extra activities implemented by the school for the different years to support students' knowledge and awareness. There was limited modification of the school curriculum to meet the different needs of its students, especially in raising the expectations in lessons.

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	114	9%
	Last year	88	7%
Teachers	77		61%
Students	246		70%

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

A slightly higher number of parents responded to this year's survey compared to last year. Much higher percentages of teachers and students responded to their surveys. Most parents and students were broadly satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school, particularly in Islamic Education, English, mathematics and science. Almost all parents thought their child had a good understanding of Islam but students were less positive. Most parents felt their child was well looked after while at school but only a majority of parents and students felt that the school dealt well with bullying. While teachers were positive about the support provided by the school in guiding students toward future educational choices and careers, not all parents agreed. A majority of parents and students felt that most teachers' comments and suggestions helped to improve learning. Most parents and almost all teachers felt that the school's leaders listened to their opinions, involved them in decision making and felt the school was well led.

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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