



National Agenda



Early years



Special educational
needs and disabilities



Innovation

Inspection Report 2015-2016

Philadelphia Private School

Curriculum: US

Overall rating: Acceptable

Read more about the school



www.khda.gov.ae

“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.ppsdubai.org
Telephone	04-2646202
Address	Muhaisnah 4, Qusais, Dubai
Principal	Elizabeth Sadek
Language of instruction	English
Inspection dates	9 to 12 November 2015

Students



Gender of students	Boys and girls
Age range	4-18
Grades or year groups	Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12
Number of students on roll	1,538
Number of children in pre-kindergarten	0
Number of Emirati students	53
Number of students with SEND	32
Largest nationality group of students	Syrian

Teachers / Support staff



Number of teachers	105
Largest nationality group of teachers	Lebanese
Number of teaching assistants	17
Teacher-student ratio	1 to 25
Number of guidance counsellors	0
Teacher turnover	39%

Curriculum



Educational permit / Licence	US
Main curriculum	US / California
External tests and examinations	SAT 1 and 2, PSAT
Accreditation	NEASC candidate
National Agenda benchmark tests	IBT

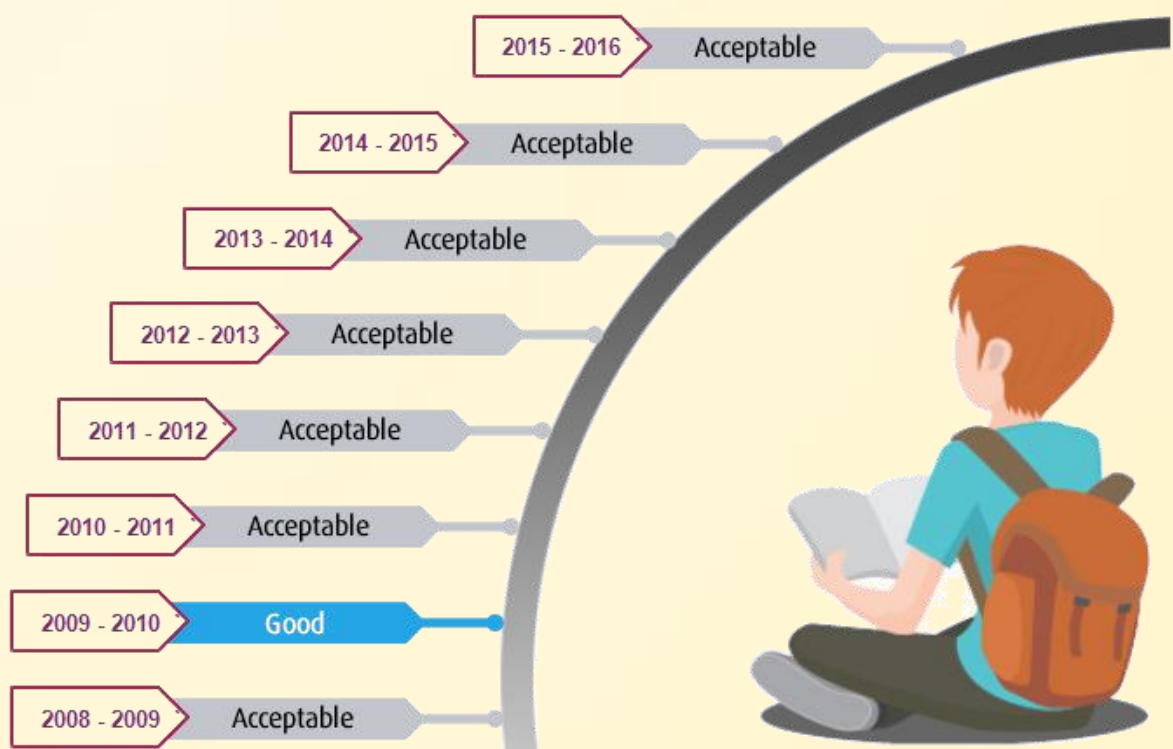


Summary for parents and the community

Philadelphia Private School was inspected by DSIB from 9 to 12 of November 2015. 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 judgements were drawn from evidence gathered by the inspection team, including observing children learning in lessons, looking at their work, talking with children, meetings with the staff, parents and governors, and reviewing the parents', teachers' and senior students' surveys.





How well did the school perform overall?

Overall, **Philadelphia Private School** provided an **acceptable** quality of education for its students.

- There had been a number of improvements in attainment and progress since the previous inspection. In the kindergarten phase, progress in English and mathematics had improved to good. In English in the elementary phase, both attainment and progress had improved to good and in the high school phase progress had also moved to good. However, in Arabic as a first language in the middle school, attainment had dropped to acceptable. Both attainment and progress in mathematics in the elementary phase dropped to acceptable. The learning skills of kindergarten students had improved to good overall.
- Students' personal and social responsibility were good overall, except in high school, where social responsibility and innovation skills were very good.
- Teaching for effective learning improved in the kindergarten phase to good, the same judgment for teaching in the high school phase. However teaching in the elementary and middle phases remained at an acceptable level.
- The quality of curriculum design and adaptation remained the same as in the previous year's inspection. They were good for curriculum quality and acceptable for curriculum adaptation.
- Health and safety in the kindergarten was very good. However across all other phases judgments were outstanding. The quality of support was good in all phases except in the high school where it was acceptable.
- The effectiveness of leadership, the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, and relationships with parents and the community remained good. However governance had dropped in quality to acceptable. The quality of management, staffing, facilities and resources was also acceptable.



What did the school do well?

- The energy, enthusiasm, determination and commitment to improve student learning in the school, shown by all members of the leadership team, ably lead by principal.
- The improved consistency of good quality teaching and learning in the kindergarten.
- The improved levels of student achievement in English in the elementary phase.
- The strong levels of school communication with parents, particularly of kindergarten children and of students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Parents received weekly newsletters which included strategies to support their child's learning while at home.



What does the school need to do next?

- Ensure that the governing board meets at least a good standard of governance when evaluated against the *UAE Schools Inspection Framework*. This must include improved:
 - levels of stakeholder representation
 - accountability for the school's actions and outcomes
 - influence on, and responsibility for, the schools performance.
- Improve the level of expectation of teachers and the consistency of better teaching, especially in the elementary and middle phases, by ensuring that lesson planning and lesson delivery more closely match the identified needs of all students.
- Improve the school's assessment practices by:
 - ensuring that teachers' oral and written feedback to students helps improve students' knowledge of their strengths, weaknesses and next steps
 - aligning students' internal assessment grades with International Benchmark Test (IBT) results.
- Improve the quality of support for students in the high school phase by increasing the level of career guidance; and for students with SEND across the school by utilizing improved identification strategies and accommodations to better meet their learning needs.
- Improve students' levels of achievement in Arabic as an additional language by:
 - utilizing the best teachers as role models for others
 - better linking the assessment of students' achievement levels to targeted planning of daily activities in lessons.



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

- School leaders were committed to inclusive enrolment and had appointed a number of staff to support students with SEND.
- Procedures to identify children in the kindergarten who may have SEND, along with students that may be gifted or talented, were not sufficiently targeted to provide the required support for their assessed needs.
- Parents expressed confidence in the SEND team's ability to develop strategic individual education plans. A number of parents were critical of the school's model of withdrawal as it did not allow for integration and access to more in-class support and teaching for their child.
- Progress was mostly acceptable in the key subjects and often better during group settings.
- Parents of students with SEND were not satisfied with the quality of information and guidance in the high school phase, especially when career discussions took place.

National Agenda Parameter



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

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

Main points:

- The school did not fully meet the registration requirements of the National Agenda Parameter. The school's attainment data was not sufficient to make a full judgment on the progress towards National Agenda targets.
- The school promoted awareness of the National Agenda to some extent among the wider school community.
- The alignment of the curriculum was still at early stages of development. The school planned to use IBT data to plan for continuity and progression, and to identify the relevant subject skills for development.
- The development of critical thinking and application to real life experiences were not fully developed in the elementary and middle phases. Planning documents and classroom teaching strategies employed by most teachers were rarely matched to higher expectations.
- Students had begun to use learning technologies effectively in some lessons, across all phases, to support their research and investigative skills. Science teachers had a better understanding of research techniques and put them to good use in biology, chemistry and physics lessons. In these subjects the learning was student-centered and increasingly independent.

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 and the governing board had begun to consider their response to the national innovation agenda and how they would promote a culture of innovation within the school. There were professional learning and development opportunities for teachers that provided implicit information about how to embed innovation into their teaching and learning practices. The governing board and senior leaders were making plans to modify the school's infrastructure to help promote a culture of innovation. The school had established a partnership with a professional development company to help develop innovation in teaching, learning and curriculum programs.

Overall school performance

Acceptable

1. Students' achievement


		KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Islamic education 	Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language 	Attainment	Not applicable	Good	Acceptable ↓	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	Acceptable	Good ↑	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Good ↑	Good ↑	Acceptable	Good ↑
Mathematics 	Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable ↓	Acceptable	Good
	Progress	Good ↑	Acceptable ↓	Good	Good
Science 	Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
	Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Learning skills	Good ↑	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

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

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



3. Teaching and assessment

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


4. Curriculum

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum design and implementation	Good	Good	Good	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	Very good 	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Care and support	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable 

6. Leadership and management

	All phases
The effectiveness of leadership	Good
School self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
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.

Judgements are made on a six-point scale



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

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

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

1. Students' achievement

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	Good ↑
Mathematics	Acceptable	Good ↑
Science	Acceptable	Acceptable

- In English, the majority of children showed expected development in their literacy and communication skills. Their knowledge of phonics had promoted a range of initial reading skills, as well as some creative spelling in their writing. They showed good book knowledge and could sequence and retell a story. Overall, they showed an adequate mastery of a range of literacy skills that were used in the classroom to develop and show understanding in all content areas. Progress was better than expected for the majority of children.
- In mathematics children were working at expected levels in counting and operations. Most children could confidently count up to 20 and identify patterns and shapes at expected levels. Measurement skills were still developing. Addition and subtraction concepts using one-digit numbers were secure. The children were able to use their mathematical knowledge well in an integrated curriculum that regularly encouraged connections to real life. Overall, they made good progress.
- In science, children were provided with a wide range of experiences and were beginning to understand more of their world around them. They enthusiastically participated in practical activities and used an increasing range of skills when conducting investigations. For example, they determined the identity of objects through touch, smell and taste. Progress was restricted because children had insufficient time to develop scientific learning skills through prediction, experimentation, asking questions and developing their critical thinking skills.

Elementary		
Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language	Good	Good
Arabic as an additional language	Acceptable	Acceptable
English	Good ↑	Good ↑
Mathematics	Acceptable ↓	Acceptable ↓
Science	Acceptable	Acceptable

- In Islamic education, most students were working at expected levels and making expected progress in their learning. They could explain and understand the significance of the Five Pillars of Islam, as well as a range of values of Islam. They applied the Islamic manners in their practices. At the middle and upper end of this phase, most students could interpret some parts of 'Hadeeth' and use it to support their understanding of Islamic principles.
- In Arabic as a first language, the majority of students were working at higher levels than expected. Most students could respond to questions using appropriate standard Arabic. They could write grammatically-accurate sentences with different levels of complexity at the various grade levels. Most could read confidently. Their writing skills were progressing steadily. Overall, students were making better than expected progress.
- In Arabic as an additional language, most students in the early levels in this phase could use their knowledge of letters to decode new words and read basic sentences. Students at a more advanced level, could read short paragraphs appropriately. A majority could understand spoken discourse and respond using single words or utterances. The quality of their sentence writing was developing and their written script was clear. As a result, most students were attaining expected levels and making the required progress.
- In English, the majority of students demonstrated literacy skills that were above national and international standards. Writing portfolios showed rapid development in the majority of students' sentence structure, vocabulary, and their ability to strengthen their writing by planning, revising, editing and rewriting. Older students in this phase were able to read texts above grade level and recount key ideas that showed skills in analyzing and reflecting for deeper meaning. Limited reliable information was available on students' attainment levels in relation to the school curriculum or from international tests over the previous 3 years. However, overall, the majority of students exceeded expected progress.
- In mathematics, the majority of students were working at expected levels. Students developed their knowledge and understanding of simple mathematical concepts positively. They worked through simple word problems confidently and used mathematical language well to describe their work. Their knowledge of multiplication tables and of shape and space was less secure. A minority of higher attaining students did not attain as well as they could, because work lacked challenge for them. In lessons, the majority of students made expected progress. It was more rapid in Grade Five due to the quality of teaching. SEND students made rapid progress in withdrawal lessons as work was modified to meet their needs. Their progress was slower in mainstream lessons as their needs were not as well catered for.

- In science lessons, students' attainment was at an age-appropriate level. Their scientific knowledge developed as expected as they progressed through the phase. However, the development of concepts was more uneven. Students' scientific thinking, enquiry and investigative skills were improving, due to recent changes to the curriculum, but required further development. External tests showed that progress had been higher than that of other students in the UAE but below the international averages. In lessons, most students, including those who had SEND, make age-appropriate progress. On occasions, older students made less than expected progress when teachers' planning did not focus specifically on the development of scientific skills and concepts, or did not provide them with the sufficient challenge to think critically.

Middle

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


- In Islamic education, students were linking their understanding of Islamic values to their real lives, supporting it with their interpretations of some parts of 'Hadeeth'. They understood the significance of the remembrance of Allah. Most students attained the levels expected for their grade. They also made the expected progress.
- In Arabic as a first language, most students were working at expected levels. They could express themselves confidently using standard Arabic. They could read and comprehend age-appropriate text and respond to questions about it. They were progressing at the expected level in their work. They could write in response to text fairly adequately. However, they were insecure in their extended and creative writing skills.
- In Arabic as an additional language, most students could read text at the required level, but most had frequent pronunciation errors. They could explain the meanings of some words using context clues and could respond to the text. Students spoke in Arabic adequately using basic sentence structures. Most students made the expected progress for their age and starting points.
- In English, students' reading, writing and communication skills were at the expected levels. Their test scores, classroom performance and work showed their literacy knowledge to be above that of the students in the region but below the expected international standards. They were able to express their opinions in thoughtful ways. Although most students were able to use their literacy skills for everyday tasks such as writing letters to their friends, they were not challenged to write for more extensive and meaningful purposes. There was limited reliable information available about students' attainment over time in relation to curriculum standards and external tests.

- In mathematics, students attained appropriately in number, algebra and the development of mathematical knowledge. They routinely solved mathematical problems which were linked to real life, with competence and confidence. External test results showed that students' lack of knowledge and understanding of geometry was affecting overall attainment. The school supported students in catching up, and they were making good progress but students, especially in Grade 8, still had significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding. As a result attainment over time was acceptable while progress was good.
- In science lessons, the attainment of the majority of students was strong. However, scientific thinking and investigative skills were less well developed. Reasoning and the application of science were also not as strong. They used scientific vocabulary appropriately to provide explanations, answer questions and to present their work. External tests showed that students made more progress than in other schools in the UAE by Grade 8, and were similar to students internationally. Progress in the majority of lessons was good. The progress of the most and least able students and those with SEND was restricted especially when teaching did not take sufficient account of students starting points.

High		
Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language	Good	Good
Arabic as an additional language	Acceptable	Acceptable
English	Acceptable	Good ↑
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Good	Good

- Students in Islamic education understood and applied the rules of Tajweed in their recitation of the Holy Qur'an. They interpreted key words in verses from the Holy Qur'an and made adequate links to current scientific facts. For example, one of the projects addressed the scientific explanations of the meeting line between two seas or what is referred to in the Holy Qur'an as "marj al Bahrain". Students increasingly related the principles of Islam to their daily lives. The majority of students worked at expected levels and made expected progress.
- Students in Arabic as a first language used standard Arabic confidently, with the majority working above expected levels. In their classroom exchanges, students demonstrated well-developed language skills. They could respond to the text both verbally and in writing. Their extended and creative writing skills were developing positively. As a result, the majority were making better than expected progress.
- In Arabic as an additional language, most students could read text that included familiar as well as unfamiliar words, with expected levels of accuracy. They could explain the meanings of some parts of the text. Their writing skills were still developing. Currently, their writing was limited to short sentences and basic structures. The majority of students made the progress expected of them.
- In English, most students demonstrated attainment and progress in line with the California Common Core State Standards. Benchmark test scores showed that the majority of students were in line with international standards in their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. They were able to read and understand grade-level texts, used learning technologies to produce, publish and share writing projects, and verbally explained their ideas to their peers. From their starting points, students made good progress as seen by their grades and self-evaluations. This was especially evident in their writing after a month long topic that focused on the writing skills of organization, editing and revising.

- In mathematics lessons, students developed good knowledge and understanding in numeracy, pre-algebra, algebra, probability and statistics. Calculation was a weaker area for a majority of students. Most students developed a good understanding of mathematical concepts and applied them well when solving mathematical and real life problems. Many students had a gap in their knowledge of geometry, which was being addressed, but required further attention. In Grades 11 and 12, students produced work of depth and quality during research, especially when presenting their ideas to their class. Students' progress as reflected in international benchmark testing and in classwork was good for most groups of students. Students with SEND made acceptable progress in class and good progress in withdrawal groups.
- Attainment in high school science lessons was better than expected for the majority of students, especially for older students. They demonstrated good investigational skills, designing and carrying out investigations capably and analyzing and synthesizing results commendably. Only very occasionally, were high standards of knowledge, understanding and the application of science reached. The majority of students made good progress in lessons and in comparison to students across the UAE. In a minority of lessons for younger students, progress was limited by a lack of challenge in lessons.


	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Learning skills	Good 	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

- Students across the school exhibited an enjoyment of learning. Children in the kindergarten were provided with a broad range of experiences which provided them with a solid foundation for the development of a range of skills. Almost all engaged with the lesson activities for extended periods. However, this was not always the case in elementary and middle phases. In Arabic languages there were too few opportunities to stimulate students' interest. Most students across all phases knew their own learning strengths. However, not all students were aware of what they needed to do to improve.
- In the kindergarten and in senior classes where group work was a common feature, students collaborated well and communicated confidently and freely. In the kindergarten, children worked confidently and often independently in groups and shared their ideas clearly. In senior biology, students engaged in practical investigations collegially. They discussed, hypothesized and debated the accuracy of their findings. These qualities were less evident in the elementary and middle phases.
- As students progressed up the school, opportunities for real-world problem solving increased. The learning for students with SEND was supported by teachers who made connections to their other subjects. However, across all phases and subjects, such opportunities were not consistently provided.
- Children in the kindergarten were able to innovatively develop an understanding of their five senses, when they were exposed to freshly cooked popcorn. In older grades, students were exposed to more complex research topics, especially in mathematics and science. In Grade 12, biology students researched split brain surgeries, including the reasoning for doing these, following their dissection of a sheep's brain. Across the school, students' critical thinking skills were not as strongly developed as the knowledge components of their thinking. High achievers were not always challenged sufficiently.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal development	Good	Good	Good	Good

- Students across all phases showed positive attitudes toward the school and their learning. Across the school, students were keen to be involved in the school's activities and daily routines.
- The overall tone of the school was positive. For the most part, behavior was good and the students were respectful and supportive of each other. They were happy to be in school and demonstrated growth in both their personal and social development.
- Students were sensitive to the individual needs of their peers within a diverse social environment. This contributed to the effectiveness of lessons and a feeling of goodwill between the students and staff. A strong caring ethos was evident.
- Students across all phases made good choices in healthy eating. They chose a variety of healthy foods and drinks from the canteen. Kindergarten children were provided with a daily healthy snack. Students were reminded of the value of a healthy lifestyle through numerous displays throughout the school.
- The school's attendance figures averaged ninety-seven percent. Punctuality was good for most phases but promptness to lessons particularly for senior students, was erratic.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good 	Good	Good	Good

- Children in the kindergarten could identify the Five Pillars of Islam, sing the UAE national anthem and identify major landmarks in Dubai. They knew that these practices and symbols influenced their life in the UAE. Students across the school understood that the UAE is a Muslim country and respected the impact of the values of Islam on their lives.
- Students at the top end of the school reflected a strong appreciation and understanding of the UAE culture. Students new to Dubai felt particularly secure and welcomed to settle in Dubai. They felt they were treated with kindness and courtesy by their Emirati friends. Some reported that this move was a healing process for them and education gave them a whole new start to life.
- Students, particularly in the high school phase, had an awareness of their different cultural backgrounds and a wider sense of global understanding. They had acquired this from the experiences that the school planned as part of the curricular and extracurricular engagements in literature and art, for example, the Model United Nations (MUN) project. Students of all ages were increasingly exposed to personal differences through integrated projects and activities. These reinforced the need for tolerance and a stronger understanding of differences amongst younger students.

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

- Students of all ages assumed a wide range of responsibilities within the school. Many older students made a substantial contribution to the school and the wider community through extended and sustained community service, such as supervising younger students on a daily basis, or providing support at a center for autism over a sustained period.
- Students took a serious and responsible attitude to their work. Most saw themselves as responsible for their own improvement and felt that the ability to communicate and to persevere were keys to success. They showed enterprise skills during a business day promoted by the school. The ability to innovate and initiate were not as pronounced.
- Students of all ages demonstrated a good awareness of environmental issues such as conservation and sustainability. A number of students were involved in a recycling project, but commitment was varied across grades. In contrast, a number of students had incorporated an awareness of environmental issues into their daily lives, for example not taking plastic bags in shops and turning off lights whenever they could.

3. Teaching and assessment

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

- Almost all teachers had a sound knowledge of their subjects. In the kindergarten and high school phases, a majority of teachers ensured that students were fully challenged. They were aware of how students learned. However, teaching in the elementary and middle schools was more variable. In Arabic most teachers had a sound subject knowledge, but not all had a secure knowledge of how students learn, which impacted on the progress made.
- Planning was effective in identifying key elements to be learned in most phases and subjects. The best lesson planning included clear learning outcomes, and the incorporation of a range of learning resources to encourage students to seek evidence rather than receive knowledge passively. However, occasionally, the most able students were not sufficiently challenged. Planning for the inclusion of students with SEND in lessons was adequate.
- In most lessons, teachers asked questions to check students' understanding, and increasingly asked questions that were challenging enough to promote deep thought and stimulate meaningful discussion. A minority of teachers, particularly in the high school phase, were using terminology such as classify, analyze, predict and create, thus encouraging higher order thinking. Students were encouraged to present their own ideas as well as being permitted to hear and reflect on the ideas of others.
- Matching activities to the needs of different groups of students was a developing feature of the school, particularly in younger classes. In better lessons, teachers offered a range of challenges, but too frequently, these did not stretch the most able. In the kindergarten, expectations were well aligned to meet the needs of children and supported positive progress.

- Teachers asked open questions of their students, and often the more skillful asked students to justify conclusions or expand ideas beyond straightforward responses. Enquiry, project or research activity, particularly for older students, was undertaken through classwork and homework. In the better classes throughout the school, students were able to work independently, with some opportunity to be innovative.
- Teaching in Arabic as a first language made use of some interactive and engaging strategies to achieve lesson objectives. Teachers effectively modeled the use of standard Arabic language; their knowledge of how best students learn was not consistently sound. A majority of teachers knew their students' ability levels and could challenge them adequately. They used questioning frequently to promote some higher order thinking skills and to connect literature to students' lives.
- In Arabic as an additional language, teachers' planning was restricted to meeting the needs of the average student. High ability students were not sufficiently challenged. In most lessons, teachers shared objectives with students and maintained appropriate pace. Their knowledge of their students' needs and the alignment of lessons to expectations was developing slowly across the school.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

- Internal assessment systems were closely linked to the school's curriculum standards. The design and administration of regular curriculum based tests was closely monitored by senior leaders. Test results, while still a little over-generous, were providing increasingly consistent and accurate measures of students' progress. This was enhanced by a range of ongoing internal assessments such as marked projects.
- From a low baseline, the school was moving towards benchmark students' attainment against international expectations in Grades 4, 8 and 9 using IBT. The school planned to ensure that all students take the Pre-SAT test in Grade 10, and SAT 1 and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOFEL) as part of the requirement for graduation.
- Teachers and senior leaders were beginning to analyze data and use it to identify and address issues linked to students' progress. This information was beginning to be used to provide a curriculum and teaching program that better met the needs of most students.
- Regular monitoring of students' progress was used to provide a curriculum that met the needs of most students. The use of assessment information to plan lessons to meet the needs of all groups of students was more uneven. The quality and usefulness of teachers' feedback in class and through marking was too variable. The use of assessment to provide feedback to students and to plan lessons that met the needs of all students was also variable.
- Teachers had an adequate knowledge of the strengths and areas for development of their students, especially in Grades 11 and 12, where classes were smaller.

4. Curriculum

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

- The curriculum had a clear rationale based on the content of the California Common Core State Standards. It was sufficiently flexible to meet the aspirations of parents and students. In general, the broad and balanced curriculum met the needs of most students well. In Arabic as an additional language, the level of challenge was too low.
- The curriculum generally built on what students had previous learnt and prepared students well for their next stage in learning, but this was often inconsistent. The school was working on improving consistency, and had, for example, improved progression in mathematics to address the weakness in geometry throughout the school.
- The curricular electives provided most students in Grade 10 and beyond with a good range of choices, which largely met their aspirations. An increasing number of electives offered internationally-recognized qualifications and this number was set to increase in the following academic year. This had the strong support of parents. A few younger students were disappointed that music was not available in the middle school.
- Cross-curricular links were built into planning more frequently in the elementary school than for older students.
- Curriculum reviews were regularly undertaken by the school. These were thorough and had made a good contribution to recent improvements, however there were some areas where progression was not yet secure.
- The school taught UAE social studies as a discreet subject. The curriculum had established links with other curricular areas such as science, US social studies, mathematics and Islamic Education to support meaningful learning experiences at different levels in the school.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum adaptation	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

- Modifications to the curriculum were mostly appropriate in all key subjects. The absence of external data on progress impacted negatively on teachers' ability to target a wider range of modifications accurately and precisely. Interventions to engage all groups of students more actively in learning were not a regular feature.
- Links with local and wider communities, and the offer of extra-curricular activities, were not sufficiently well-developed. This meant that there were not enough opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate their sense of social contribution and their willingness to be innovative. This also restricted opportunities to develop their leadership skills and to promote enterprise in social, cultural and scientific activities.
- Children in the kindergarten benefited most from adaptations to the curriculum through language support and cross-curricular themes on heritage, culture and values. The social studies program in the other phases offered some opportunities for students to deepen their understanding and knowledge of the UAE.

- Arabic was taught to all kindergarten students for five periods per week. Cross-curricular links were evident in the school's planning documents which were evident in practice.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Very good ↓	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- The school's behavior policy included a child protection policy that mandated for a safe environment for both the physical and emotional safety of all students. Students, staff and parents were aware of the bullying and cyber bullying policies and the procedures associated with each. The safety and health of the students was a priority in the school which led to an environment where students felt safe and secure.
- The school environment was clean and safe, and the students were well supervised throughout the day. The school transport systems were managed in a careful and highly-efficient way. The use of student monitors both in the hallways and the outside areas, provided for an extra measure of support and security.
- Routine checks were made of the school premises and all maintenance records were documented and up to date. Fire drills were conducted regularly. Detailed reports were kept on student health, immunizations, allergies and incidents or accidents.
- All premises and facilities, as well as equipment, resources and furniture, were in good repair. Maintenance schedules showed that all buildings and equipment were inspected regularly in order to keep the students safe. However, there was no provision for students who would be unable to use the stairs due to a physical disability.
- Documentation and observation showed that healthy living was a priority in the school and a regular part of the curriculum. This was embedded into themes in the classroom lessons and modeled by staff. Students were encouraged to bring healthy snacks and lunches. They were also provided with daily opportunities for exercise and physical development.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Care and support	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable ↓

- The school operated in an atmosphere of positive respect between students and teachers. However, behavior management was not defined clearly and consistently in terms of staff expectations across all phases.
- Systems for managing attendance were practical, based on common-sense, and implemented consistently with strong levels of support from the senior leadership team. Good attendance was rewarded.
- The school had inclusive enrolment and admissions procedures. A whole-school policy for the accurate identification and support for children in the kindergarten phase and for gifted and talented students in higher grades was yet to be implemented.

- The quality of support for students with SEND was heavily reliant on a model of withdrawing students in the key subjects. Some appropriate modifications to the curriculum had been made in group settings. Not all specialist staff had the expertise or qualifications to offer specific support to children with sensory or communication and interaction needs.
- All students, especially those with SEND, required better access to personal guidance, support and information, most importantly when career options were being planned.

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

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

Acceptable

- Senior management demonstrated a commitment to inclusive enrolment procedures and had appointed an adequate number of staff for SEND. Not all staff had the appropriate qualifications to deliver a targeted and successful model of education to students with specific SEND securely and consistently.
- Procedures on entry, and when enrolled in the kindergarten phase, were underdeveloped. They lacked the necessary rigor and strategic implementation to ensure that all needs were identified. Some in-class observations were conducted by the school counsellor. However, the information gathered was often anecdotal in nature and was not followed up with a range of specific supports.
- Parents expressed confidence in the SEND team's ability to develop strategic individual education plans (IEP's). They were critical of the model of support thereafter and suggested that the model of withdrawal isolated certain students for far too long a period of time. The withdrawal of Grade 1 students was also seen as problematic.
- In the senior phases, where students were withdrawn for support in English, Arabic, science and mathematics, levels of curriculum modification were evident. Gifted and talented students had not yet been identified, and as a consequence, had not benefited from a modified program in any phase.
- Progress was mostly acceptable in the key subjects. The school had no external benchmark data. Teachers' interpretation of progress in lessons or against curriculum standards was often insecure and lacked validity. Parents of students with SEND required such information especially in the high school phase when career discussions were on the agenda.

6. Leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership

Good

- The newly-formed senior leadership team, ably led by the principal, had revised the school's purpose and direction statements. The broader range of educational goals included the development of compassionate problem solvers within local and international contexts, thus conforming to UAE national priorities.
- Almost all leaders had a thorough grasp of effective teaching, learning and assessment practices. There was an evolving learning ethos within the school, driven by school leaders. All were purposeful in their pursuit of improved students' learning outcomes.

- Leadership at all levels exhibited a tight cohesiveness in the approach to school improvement. All leaders understood their roles and undertook them with vigor and rigor, to good effect. There were clear lines of accountability that all leaders adhered to. High levels of commitment by all leaders were evident in the day-to-day and strategic work of the school.
- The leadership team was well aware of the strategic direction that the school needed to follow in order to continue its developmental process. All brought differing strengths to the team. The team's collegial approach ensured a uniformity of process.
- Leaders had made attempts to develop key aspects of the school as described in the last Inspection reports recommendations. There had been an overall improvement in the teaching and learning across most phases of the school especially that of the kindergarten phase. However, only minimal improvements had been made to the school's assessment systems, and to the schools' library which were previous recommendations.

School self-evaluation and improvement planning

Good

- The school's NEASC accreditation self-study document was provided, as agreed, rather than a DSIB based school self-evaluation for improvement planning document. The school's self-study was inclusive in its formulation, involving staff, students, parents and the governing board. It was extremely comprehensive, covering in depth all key aspects of the schools operations. The school had identified most key priorities; it had analyzed them and suggested appropriate actions. The school was generally accurate in its identification and analysis of key priorities and its key strengths.
- Some monitoring of teaching and learning took place. However it was neither inclusive of all staff nor consistent in its timeliness. There was a lack of clarity of identified school-wide teaching strengths and areas for individual teacher development. This restricted the effectiveness of the school's professional development program. Professional development remained general in nature, rather than targeting specific identified weaknesses in teaching.
- The school self-improvement plan was comprehensive. It included the development of an additional range of strategies for SEND, and assessment and appraisal systems. It also focused on the introduction of standardized testing and a research-based curriculum. These plans were detailed, and supported a systematic development throughout the school year. However, not all key success criteria were measurable in terms of improvements to students' learning outcomes. Many addressed the UAE national priorities.
- There had been positive progress in addressing the teaching and learning recommendation of the previous inspection report, particularly in the kindergarten phase, where teaching and student learning skills were judged to be good. However, there had been only minor improvements to a number of the other recommendations made in the previous DSIB inspection report. Improvements to the school library had not occurred.




Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents felt very welcome when they attended formal school events or during daily drop offs or pick-ups. The school's leaders were accessible, and there were many opportunities for parents to partake in the life of the school. The key developments within the school, such as the recently-developed school purpose and direction statements were well understood by parents. Parents contributed their opinions through surveys and questionnaires. However, they lacked an effective voice at governance level. The school's broad range of communication channels with parents kept them well informed about their child's academic and social progress and school events. Included were telephone calls, SMS, emails, the school's portal and letters. Parents of students with SEND were provided with weekly information about programs and suggested follow-up homework. Parents of children in Kindergarten 1 and 2 received regular letters, in English, Arabic and French about the weekly program and opportunities for parents to help support their child's achievement at home. Regular reporting on students' academic progress and their personal and social development occurred. However, the quality of the reports varied across the school. In the kindergarten phase, comprehensive theme-based reporting included physical, cognitive and language development. In the lower elementary phase, academic progress across all subjects was reported on as well as work habits and study skills. From Grade 3, the reports were restricted to a list of subjects and associated grades. Parents were not provided with information on the required next steps for education for their child. The school participated in the 'Model United Nations' and had an increased range of local community interactions. Included were visiting speakers and organizations who enriched the curriculum. Grade 12 students participated as volunteers in their local community as part of their curriculum requirements. 	

Governance	Acceptable ↓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The composition of the governing board was in the process of evolving. The board contributed to the purpose and direction statement, and to the school's NEASC accreditation self-study. There were no parent or staff representatives on the board, thus restricting an effective parental and staff voice. There was an acceptable level of understanding of National Agenda items, however the board's knowledge of the levels of students' achievements and associated school improvement strategies was limited. The governing board held regular meetings and relied upon regular Principal reports to inform them of changes at all levels. Senior leaders were held to account, although not all students' achievements information, was known, or understood, by all board members. The board performed a self-evaluation to determine the effectiveness of its own performance. It formally appraised the Principal on an annual basis. However, the board lacked the necessary educational expertise to ensure that all required improvements to students' learning were made. The governing board provided limited support to the school's leadership. Direction, suitable and sufficient staffing and resources were all key aspects of the schools operations that the board had not addressed sufficiently well to ensure the school moved forward. Overall the impact of the board was limited. 	

Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The day-to-day running of the school was adequate. Senior students took a key role in effectively ushering students into, around and out of the school. Timetables were constructed in a satisfactory manner. The school's routines were well known by students. Students were kept informed of developments through notice boards and regular phase-level assemblies. • The school was adequately staffed. However, many teachers had demanding teaching loads. Staff turnover had been high. The school did not have a suitably-qualified careers counselor to provide senior students with sufficient careers guidance. Staff were provided with a broad range of professional development topics. However, these were often generic in nature and did not always meet the specific needs of individual teachers. • The premises and school facilities were presented in a clean but unattractive manner. They lacked brightness and presented as dull learning environments. Classrooms and specialist rooms were of adequate size. However, the library resources and facilities did not support students' reading for enjoyment or research. • The school had an adequate range of resources, including manipulative, interactive and other physical materials, including learning technologies to support student learning. In the kindergarten phase, students' learning benefited from many opportunities for hands-on activities. Senior science students had access to a range of appropriate practical resources to allow for age-appropriate investigations. Limited library resources, including fictional and non-fictional material and technology, were available in this key facility to support learning. 	

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	
Parents* 	2015-2016	31
	2014-2015	312
Teachers 	53	
Students 	244	

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

- A small percentage of parents, a majority of staff and most students, who were able to take part in this year's survey, responded. Most parents who completed their surveys reported that they were satisfied with the quality of the education available to their child. A similar percentage of students also responded positively to the question.
- Most parents and students agreed that students' progress in English, mathematics and science was good. However, both groups were less positive about the quality of progress in Islamic education or Arabic.
- Most parents and students agreed that they felt safe when in school, and that the school was well led.
- Most parents agreed that the school listened to and acted on their views, and kept them well informed about their child's progress at school through meetings and academic reports.
- Teachers were all extremely positive about all facets of the school's operations.

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