

Universal American School...



National Agenda



Early years



Special educational
needs and disabilities



Innovation

Inspection Report 2015-2016

Universal American School- Branch

Curriculum: US/IB

Overall rating: Good

Read more about the school



www.khda.gov.ae

“Don't look
behind to
see who is
following you,
but look forward
to be ahead”



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

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School information

General information



Location	Festival City
Type of school	Private
Opening year of school	2005
Website	www.uasdubai.ae
Telephone	04-232-5222
Address	Dubai Festival City, PO Box 79133
Principal	Mr. Andrew Torris
Language of instruction	English
Inspection dates	21 to 24 March 2016

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	1,473
Number of children in pre-kindergarten	51
Number of Emirati students	105
Number of students with SEND	65
Largest nationality group of students	US

Teachers / Support staff



Number of teachers	155
Largest nationality group of teachers	US
Number of teaching assistants	22
Teacher-student ratio	1:9
Number of guidance counsellors	5
Teacher turnover	30%

Curriculum



Educational permit / License	US
Main curriculum	US / IB
External tests and examinations	MAP, PSAT, SAT, ITBS and IBDP – “Iowa”
Accreditation	Middle States, CIS
National Agenda benchmark tests	ITBS

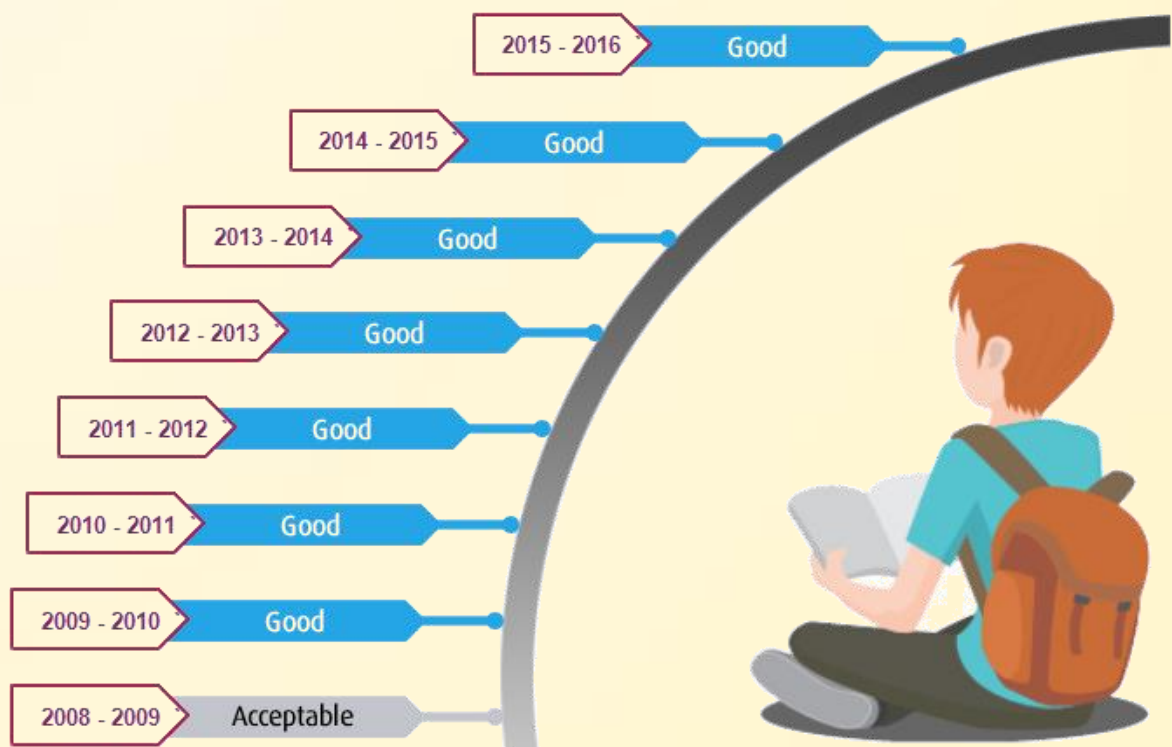


Summary for parents and the community

Universal American School was inspected by the DSIB from 21 to 24 March 2016. The overall quality of education provided by the school was found to be **good**.

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, Universal American School provided a **good** quality education for its students.

- Students' attainment and progress were good or very good in English, math and science across all phases. Their attainment and progress in Arabic as a first language were good in the Elementary grades, while their attainment was acceptable in the Middle and High Schools. In Arabic as an additional language, students' attainment was good in the Elementary with very good progress. In the Middle and High Schools, students' attainment was acceptable with good progress in the Middle School. Their attainment and progress in Islamic education were acceptable in all phases. Students were enthusiastic to learn and participate in line with the school's promotion of literate learners. Children in the Kindergarten worked very well together, willingly sought out new ways to complete activities and applied what they understood to their own lives.
- Students' personal and social development remained a strong feature of the school community. Almost all students behaved very well, sought assistance when they needed it and their attendance rates were high. They respected Islamic culture, contributed well to society and were aware of their responsibilities to relate their global understanding for the good of others. Students' environmental awareness was high. There was potential to raise this awareness among greater numbers of students across the whole school.
- Teachers were very committed to their students' achievements. Significant teacher turnover had taken place, leading to increased expectations for better alignment with the school's instructional vision. This was a challenge for some teachers, particularly in the Middle and High Schools. While eager to support students' learning, some teachers were not sufficiently clear in the curriculum's direction. Teachers in the Kindergarten and Elementary phases developed opportunities for critical thinking. They used time and resources well and enabled students to work towards learning targets suited to their abilities and interests. The assessment of learning was conducted using a wide range of internal and external benchmarks. Excellent tracking of the progress made in Kindergarten and Elementary was in place.
- The curriculum was in transition. The new Middle School curriculum was operating effectively. Curriculum development, matched by better implementation, was a strong feature of the Arabic department. This led to marked improvement for students. However, combining the Common Core State Standards and the International Baccalaureate program led to some instructional confusion among teachers. This meant that their commitment to support learning as much as possible was at times misdirected.
- The campus was very safe. A highly efficient, very pleasant and positive learning environment was in place. Students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) were admitted and their overall progress had improved since the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders with genuine commitment, high skill levels and expectations of excellence were in place. Governors were focused on achieving the best outcomes possible for students and had established a very strong platform for improvements over time. The school operated efficiently and smoothly on a daily basis.



What did the school do well?

- Middle and Elementary school students were making better progress in Arabic, while children in the Kindergarten were achieving well in English, math and science. Elementary students achieved well in math.
- The school environment was impressively laid out, effectively supporting creative learning opportunities for students.
- Students' personal and social development continued to be of a very high standard.
- The leaders' vision and the initial steps taken helped the school to move forward in this transitional phase.
- Self-evaluation processes had become more rigorous and systematic and were having positive effects upon teacher monitoring and professional development.
- The well-established and inclusive partnership with parents was contributing to better student achievement across many parts of the school.



What does the school need to do next?

- Raise all students' achievements in Islamic education and Arabic in the High School by reviewing the curriculum and ensuring that the teaching is consistently of high quality.
- Articulate a clear and cohesive curriculum across the school, enabling teachers to deliver their best instruction using accurate assessment information in line with the curriculum standards.
- Use valid assessment data within lessons so that the needs of every student, including those with SEND and the most able, are known and addressed successfully.
- Ensure that leaders set and meet the highest expectations for curriculum design, implementation and evaluation.



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

- Most students with SEND were making good progress in their classroom work. The school provided a varied schedule of support to help students optimize their learning in and out of classrooms. Students in Grades 10 to 12 received withdrawal support.
- Students made better progress when teachers planned and implemented specifically tailored questions and activities designed to suit their abilities, interests and needs.
- The parents of students with SEND were updated on their children's progress through report cards, and updates to their individual educational plans (IEPs), once per term. The SEND staff provided support and guidance to parents on daily issues and on their children's long-term plans. Parents were receiving an increased allocation of time to discuss their children's progress in greater depth.
- Significant progress had been made by the interim head of SEND in using the best practices available to develop more focused interventions; these had enabled better outcomes for students.

National Agenda Parameter



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

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

Main points:

- The school met the registration requirements of the National Agenda Parameter. No attainment data was available to make a judgement on the progress towards meeting the National Agenda targets.
- The governors, owners and the Principal had promoted awareness and understanding of the National Agenda and its targets among most stakeholders.
- The school had carried out a lot of work to improve literacy across all subjects. In math and science the curricula needed further alignment to the TIMSS and PISA test requirements in both content and skills.
- The development of problem-solving skills and the application of concepts to real situations were strong features of the teaching. The development of critical thinking and questioning skills was less consistently observed in math and science lessons.
- Students used variety of resources to develop their research skills as aligned to the National Agenda targets, but this was inconsistently observed across different subjects and phases.

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 were enthusiastic in promoting a culture of innovation across the school. Their strategic plan was in development. There was ongoing professional development to teach critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Teachers engaged students through 'flipped classroom' models, Socratic discussions, debates, and collaborative learning through 'Google Classroom.' The learning environment and infrastructure encouraged creativity, facilitated by a well-resourced program that mapped the progression of knowledge and skills. The curriculum provided innovative learning opportunities for students, teachers and school leaders. It included opportunities for risk-taking and entrepreneurship.

Overall school performance

Good

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	Acceptable
	Progress	Not applicable	Good	Good ↑	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language 	Attainment	Not applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Not applicable	Very good ↑	Good ↑	Acceptable
English 	Attainment	Very good ↓	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	Very good ↓	Very good ↑	Good	Good
Math 	Attainment	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Good	Good
	Progress	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Good	Good
Science 	Attainment	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Good

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Learning skills	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good




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

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


3. Teaching and assessment

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



4. Curriculum

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

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

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

6. Leadership and management

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



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	Very good ↓	Very good ↓
Math	Very good ↑	Very good ↑
Science	Very good ↑	Very good ↑

- In English a large majority of KG children demonstrated literacy skills that were above the curriculum standards. Children spoke enthusiastically with fluency and confidence. They listened carefully and easily followed complex directions. Their strong phonemic awareness allowed them to read unfamiliar words. Their writing skills were developing and a minority of children could properly write sentences with simple punctuation. Their handwriting skills were developing as their fine motor skills improved. Consequently, the quality of handwriting did not match that of their speaking and literacy skills. Overall, the children made very good progress, including those for whom English was an additional language.
- In math a large majority of the children demonstrated skills above the curriculum expectations. By KG 2 the children could identify and describe shapes and compare measurable attributes. They understood addition as putting together and subtraction as taking away. A large majority could use everyday objects to help them with their understanding of subtraction. Children made very good progress in relation to their starting points.
- In science, children's attainment levels were above curriculum standards. Their understanding of the world and their place in it was very good. A large majority of children could describe how they knew when a plant was alive and what a plant needed to grow. They knew their five senses and could cite specific examples of using these from their trip to the beach. They understood and used scientific skills in observation and prediction. Overall, all children made very good progress in relation to their starting points.

Elementary

Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Acceptable	Acceptable
Arabic as a first language	Good	Good
Arabic as an additional language	Good	Very good ↑
English	Good	Very good ↑
Math	Very good ↑	Very good ↑
Science	Good	Good

- In Islamic education, most students attained levels that were in line with the MoE curriculum standards. They had secure knowledge and understanding of the six Pillars of Faith and its importance in the life of every Muslim. Most students recognized that the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) was the final messenger from God, and they could state His message that was sent to all mankind and the importance of following the Qur'an's teachings. They knew the names of the prophets mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Most students demonstrated a secure understanding of the steps of ablution and their importance, through reciting the related Hadeeth and Du'aa. They had appropriate recitation skills, such as reciting Surat Al Fajr. Most students made the expected progress in lessons and over time.
- In Arabic as a first language, most Arab students demonstrated well developed listening and comprehension skills and followed instructions in standard Arabic easily. They made significant progress in their reading skills and identified the main features of different types of text. They were making good progress in developing the ability to construct appropriate responses to those that they heard and read. They made steady progress with their writing skills, although many students' spelling was inaccurate. Students' oral communication was very clear, but was sometimes influenced by colloquial language.
- Learning Arabic as an additional language, the majority of students attained levels that were above the Modern Foreign Language (MFL) curriculum standards. A large majority of students across all levels made very good progress in listening, reading and writing in lessons and against the learning objectives. The school's assessment data provided details of students' good attainment and very good progress in acquiring the four language skills. Students had very good listening skills and could follow their teachers' instructions using high levels of standard Arabic. A majority of students were able to read short sentences and familiar texts. They were able to write short essays with correct grammar and use of verb tenses.
- In English, on both internal and external assessments, students attained at or above the international benchmarks and a large majority made better than expected progress. Students had frequent opportunities to read and discuss books to improve their comprehension and were able to make predictions supported by textual evidence. A large majority of students showed marked improvement in their reading and writing. Students accessed increasingly complex texts and summarized, made connections, and demonstrated mature understanding when discussing and writing. While students' outputs were aligned to the Common Core State Standards, some groups progressed unevenly. Students performing above the expectations, rarely had sufficiently challenging reading and writing tasks to progress even further.
- A large majority of students in math demonstrated numerical skills and conceptual understanding above curriculum expectations. By Grade 5 they had made very good progress in basic geometry, data interpretation and problem-solving. They could apply their skills when, for example, applying ratios and percentages to bakery activities.

- In science, students' scores indicated good attainment and progress, with Grade 3 strongest and Grade 5 the most challenged. This was reflected in most science lessons observed. The units of inquiry for Grades 2 and 3 had a science or engineering theme. Grade 2 students had developed a bank of facts about ocean habitats and each presented them in a manner best suited to their learning styles. The more able students made scientific connections, noting that deep sea creatures seemed dark colored, hypothesizing that this was linked to the distance between them and sunlight. While students in Grade 3 had acquired some understanding of scientific inquiry methods, they were not measuring results.

Middle

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

- Most students had acceptable levels of knowledge of the key Islamic concepts and vocabulary. They made steady progress in developing an understanding of Islamic values and confidently explained how these affected some aspects of their lives; for example, the value of work from an Islamic perspective. They were beginning to understand the evidence from Holy Qur'an to support their arguments for the existence of the Creator. They reached adequate skill levels in the memorization of the Holy Qur'an.
- Most students of Arabic as a first language were making significant progress when analyzing a wide range of texts. Their ability to express their own ideas in writing was steadily improving; they used an increasing range of vocabulary and displayed a greater level of coherence in their extended written texts. Most students attained levels that were in line with the curriculum. Most students' listening skills were very good. Speaking skills, while clear by the vast majority, were frequently dominated by dialects. For a significant proportion of students, basic spelling errors were too frequent.
- In Arabic as an additional language, most students attained levels that were at the MFL curriculum standards. They were able to follow teachers' directions in Arabic, but required repetition occasionally. Assessment data and tracking records provided evidence of students' varied levels of attainment and good progress overtime. In lessons, students lacked the confidence to speak using standard Arabic. However, they responded to familiar questions in short phrases. They could read familiar texts and answer questions with visual prompts. Most students used the dictionary adequately to search for the meaning of new vocabulary and made attempts to use the words to construct sentences.
- In external tests in English, a majority of students demonstrated levels of progress and attainment at or above the expectations. Students used simple texts to compare and contrast genres and identify textual features. Students also engaged in discussions to prepare for informative writing and offered one another feedback on their poetry writing. The majority of lessons reinforced students' listening and speaking skills and some students were able to transfer those skills to their written work. For example, following whole class discussions, students used graphic organizers effectively to record their ideas. While most groups of students made the expected progress, the more able students did not progress as quickly as expected.

- In math, the majority of students' attainment was above curriculum standards. They were learning to explain their findings and understanding of various mathematical concepts. They could apply their skills to their own life experiences, for example, when investigating the relationship between the food supply and population growth. Students made good progress in the skills of numeracy and problem-solving. Their progress in developing algebraic skills and conceptual understanding of basic functions was, in general, slow. The most able students did not always make the expected progress due to the low level of challenge.
- In science, test scores reflected good attainment and progress. Grade 6 students made somewhat tenuous comparisons between embryos of mammals, reptiles and birds to imply shared ancestry. In Grade 7, students exercised their engineering skills to construct models of earthquake resistant structures and then tested them on a vibrating plate, but did not assess the single variable accurately. By Grade 8, students conducted experiments into heat transfer. While they were able to design their own experiments, some lacked scientific validity, with altered variables, insufficiently fair test principles and unreliable measurement of the observed results.

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

- In Islamic education, most students attained levels that were in line with the MoE curriculum standards. They demonstrated secure understanding of Islamic concepts and values such as honesty and taking responsibility. They had adequate knowledge about the Day of Judgment and its reference in the Holy Qur'an. Their ability to link Islamic concepts to their own lives was still developing. They could provide examples about scientific miracles from the Holy Qur'an. Most students in this phase understood Al Seerah and could refer to it during class discussions. The majority of students understood Sunnah, such as linking the importance of education to Hadeeth. Most students made the expected progress in lessons and over time.
- In Arabic as a first language, most students demonstrated secure listening skills and could follow and respond to standard Arabic appropriately. Their ability to communicate ideas orally was adequate but with some reliance by the majority of students on local dialects. They made steady progress in learning new vocabulary and improving their reading skills, particularly in the lower grades of high school. However, their writing skills were generally limited and a significant proportion struggled with basic spelling. Further progress by many students in the Diploma Program was inhibited by the inappropriate modification of the curriculum provided to them.
- In Arabic as an additional language, most students attained levels that were at the MFL standards. The majority of students were able to read simple sentences and answer familiar questions. They required support in their listening and responding skills, which were developing more slowly. In one lesson, students wrote persuasive letters to a friend to invite him or her to visit Dubai, and listed reasons why Dubai was a city attractive for tourists. Most students relied on visual prompts and teachers' support to complete written tasks. They could state the main points of a video on the UAE's culture and the traditional foods eaten in the UAE.

- In English, the majority of students made or exceeded the expected progress and demonstrated knowledge, skills and understanding that were aligned to the curriculum standards. However, in measuring their attainment against the IB expectations, students scored slightly below the international averages. Students connected different areas of their knowledge. They carried out textual analysis in real time and revised their writing to enhance their use of context. The more able students benefitted from the increased rigor of higher level courses, where their own opinions were linked to complex interpretations and inference-based challenges.
- In math, a majority of students had secure skills in algebra and functions. The collective performance of standard Level students was above the curriculum expectations, while the performance of higher Level students was in line with expectations. They made very good progress when applying their skills within the curriculum context and when answering examination questions. Their abilities to apply multiple concepts to unknown situations was less secure.
- In science, test scores showed good attainment and progress. The previous cohort's IB results indicated that the best progress was in standard Level Biology, but with highly varied scores across the four science options at both the higher and standard Levels. During the lessons observed, while inquiry and critical thinking skills were developing, a deficit remained in terms of the self-direction expected of an IB scientific learner. Grade 11 and 12 students had acquired greater knowledge but had not fully developed the research and critical thinking skills necessary for the rigors of the IB Diploma's higher level scientific challenges.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Learning skills	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

- Kindergarten children demonstrated independence; sharing their wisdom about plants in words or pictures. English students were self-directed when enabled. Math students demonstrated good attitudes, but lacked independence. In contrast, the Grade 2 scientists readily reviewed each other's ocean research. However, Middle and High School students followed writing templates rather than designing their own investigations.
- Kindergarten children collaborated well with their peers. In math they worked in groups to share their understanding of subtraction using everyday objects. Older students also interacted well in math and science lessons. They developed communication and research skills in Arabic and English, however Middle School English students did not regularly take responsibility for their own outcomes. Students rarely presented their learning to others.
- Kindergarten children often connected their learning to their lives. They related their five senses to their beach experiences. Elementary science students, in their experiments did not offer any applications of their work to daily life. In the Middle School, English students referred to migrant workers and social studies to enrich their writing. In Arabic as an additional language, students were eager to use examples from the natural world familiar to them in their writing. High school physicists made natural connections with math.
- During free inquiry, Kindergarten children used resources imaginatively to create and exploit learning opportunities. They used learning technologies to solve problems. Older students did not apply technology well in math, using only the basic functions of graphic calculators rather than seeing them as an investigative tool. In Arabic they were not enterprising in their approach to constructing opinions for their speaking and writing tasks. Science students increasingly used technology to further their research and critical thinking, frequently accessing an online portal as a resource.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal development	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Students across the school had very strong and positive attitudes toward their learning. Most were independent and inquisitive learners and were eager and willing to take risks and think for themselves, when enabled. They responded very well to feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- Most students demonstrated excellent behavior. In hallways, classrooms and outside, students treated adults and each other with respect and consideration. Students consistently demonstrated self-discipline and incidents of bullying were rare. The excellent behavior of students had a strong influence on the positive school environment.
- There were strong and respectful relationships among students and with staff members. Students across the school were kind, considerate and helpful. As a result, students reported that they felt safe at school and that there were a number of adults and fellow students they could turn to for support or guidance if they had a problem.
- The promotion of healthy living in classes and through choices in the school cafeteria resulted in students internalizing the importance of good food choices. Students had excellent understanding of safe and healthy living. Younger children could explain which foods were healthy and why. They knew the importance of regular exercise. Older students had a more sophisticated understanding of nutrition, explaining the negative effects of salt, sugars and unsaturated fats on the body. Most students made healthy lifestyle choices by participating in sports and games or regular exercise programs.
- Overall, students' rates of attendance were outstanding. Most students were punctual to school and lessons, although a few students arrived late to school.

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

- Students across all phases had excellent understanding of Islamic values and their influence on UAE's society and culture. They gave practical examples of how they might demonstrate generosity, kindness, and honesty. Older students appreciated being part of UAE's society and they reported that such values were reflected in their relationships with each other and with their teachers in the school.
- Students had strong awareness and understanding of the Emirati heritage and culture. For instance, students in the Middle and High phases were able to discuss the topic of 'dress code' in shopping malls and around Dubai as part of showing respect to the people in the UAE. In addition, children in the Kindergarten wrote about what they loved about the UAE, such as the beautiful beaches and the desert.
- Students across different phases had exceptional understanding of their own cultures and appreciation of world cultures, often gained from the school's diverse community. Students in the older phases demonstrated excellent understanding of the main issues happening all around the world. High school students created hashtags to pray for different countries in crisis. They also talked about the importance of celebrating the Lunar New Year in the Chinese culture.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

- Following curricular initiatives and input by the school council, students contributed effectively to the community. Through their exhibition, students in the Elementary school developed projects in support of the local labor force. In Islamic education, older students raised funds to support the Red Crescent's construction of a mosque in Indonesia. Senior students worked in Cambodia to improve two schools.
- Students suggested that success in school was the outcome of motivation and a positive mindset. Most illustrated this in classrooms and around the school. There were a few exceptions, noticeably in the Middle School. Students used entrepreneurial skills to raise funds through bake sales and a sponsored "Aquathon."
- Kindergarten children contributed positively as helpers in classrooms. Most showed an excellent work ethic and were conscientious about recycling. Older students described the importance of an eco-centered mentality. They felt they had not yet established as sustainable a campus as they should.



3. Teaching and assessment

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Good	Good

- Most teachers had secure subject knowledge. Teachers' understanding of how students learn and how to ensure they were all engaged and working purposefully was also secure. This was most noticeable when students worked collaboratively in groups, for example in the elementary grades. Teachers' understanding of how young children in the Kindergarten acquired and developed key skills was a particular strength in the school. For example, teachers managed very well the groups of children during construction of mind maps about what plants need to grow and from where these elements are sourced. A minority of teachers' understanding of the IB learner profile was not strong.

Most teachers planned their lessons carefully and to a great level of detail. For the most part, lesson plans were very well aligned to grade level descriptors; however, in some cases, the planned work included unnecessary repetition with a lack of progression in knowledge. Most teachers used time well, particularly in the Kindergarten and elementary grades. Appropriate use of resources enhanced students' learning, ensuring high levels of engagement. In a few cases, plans did not ensure that sufficient links between learning and real-life contexts were exploited in, for example, science experiments. Most teachers ensured good variety in their lessons. When teachers were very clear on the curriculum standards and expectations, their planning, the activities and the resources used were consistently of a high quality. Lesson planning did not always provide sufficient opportunities for independence in learning.

- In most subjects, teachers interacted well with students and used their good relationships to encourage learning. This was a particular strength in the Kindergarten and elementary grades. Group discussions were a main feature of most lessons in most subjects across the different phases of the school. Some middle school lessons were dominated by the teachers. In most subjects, teachers' use of questions supported students' learning and provided ample opportunity for the development of thinking and reflection.
- Most teachers were well aware of their students' strengths, weaknesses and their potentials. In the work they set, they took into account the different levels of ability for most students and set appropriate tasks. However, some teachers did not take account of the full range of needs, including those with SEND and the most able. Across most phases of the school, the planning and implementation of different tasks to meet the needs of individual students was limited.
- Teaching had significantly improved since last year, but some lessons did not consistently challenge students with sufficient rigor in order to develop the key skills. Teachers were not always clear in what they expected of students and the degree of independent, critical thinking they wished to promote to solve problems.
- Teaching Arabic as a first language was generally of good quality in most lessons in Elementary and Middle and had significantly improved since last year. It was acceptable in High, particularly in DP. In most lessons, teachers set appropriate learning objectives and designed relevant tasks that enabled students to progress in most areas of learning. They set up and managed collaborative learning in groups and used questions effectively to enhance learning. Independent learning opportunities were less frequent. In a few cases, teaching was less effective when the planned activities were not matched well to students' needs and provided limited opportunity for progression, particularly in the upper grades of High.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Assessment	Very good 	Very good 	Acceptable 	Good

- A range of assessment processes linked to the curriculum was observed across the school to verify students' attainment. A new type of assessment based on rubrics was introduced. This process was still in development. The interpretation of the rubrics and levels of challenge were inconsistent across different phases and subjects, particularly in the Middle School.
- The school benchmarked students' outcomes against the IB-DP and Common Core State Standards. This year the International Benchmark Test [ITBS] was introduced to all students in Grades 4, 8 and 9. Students' attainment and progress, were also benchmarked using Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) across almost all grades, together with the SAT and PSAT tests.
- Assessment data was recorded and analyzed in some depth. In the Kindergarten and Elementary phases, information about students' progress was tracked consistently and effectively. However, the criteria for evaluating progress were not yet finalized. In the Middle and the lower High school phases, this process was still in development. The alignment of internal assessment data with external benchmarks was in the early stages of development.
- A wide range of information was available to all teachers in all departments. The use of data to improve students' learning was inconsistent across subjects in the Middle and High school and did not best serve the needs of all students. The analysis of results to influence teaching and to make modifications to the curriculum was evolving, but had progressed most in the Kindergarten.

- Most teachers had good knowledge of their students' attainment and progress. Their use of it to provide focused instruction for selected students was inconsistent, especially in the Middle School. In most subjects, some teacher feedback was given to students through the analysis of their tasks. However, the quality of this feedback and guidance on how students could improve varied across different subjects and phases.

4. Curriculum

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

- The curriculum was reasonably broad and balanced and generally aligned to the New York State Common Core Standards, and International Baccalaureate (IB) standards. While the Kindergarten and Elementary curricula were well balanced, the Middle and High school curricula did not address the full breadth and depth of the standards. They combined different curricular approaches in ways that limited students' development of cohesive skills and content knowledge.
- The curriculum was planned and sequenced to build upon students' learning in most phases and the large majority of students were prepared well for their next phases of education. Vertical and horizontal curriculum maps were designed to meet the needs of most students; however, some areas of the curriculum lacked adequate progression between the New York and IB content. At times the combination of these curricula presented instructional and assessment challenges for teachers and students as they sought to build upon previously acquired skills and knowledge.
- Students had access to a variety of curricular options and were able to form their own pathways to learning. In the High school, both standard and higher level IB classes were offered and nearly all students had a range of electives. During school hours and as extra-curricular activities, students had additional learning opportunities including art, music, world languages, sports and various clubs. Additionally, Middle and High school students engaged in a 'Week Without Walls' trip, which included a variety of destinations, focused on service learning, cultural exchange, and connections to the IB Diploma requirements.
- Cross-curricular learning was both evident and authentic, and many lessons drew on knowledge from multiple content areas. Students transferred their skills across several subjects and applied their knowledge in a variety of curricular contexts.
- The school demonstrated a systemic approach to curriculum review and revision. Many areas of the curriculum were adjusted to connect the IB and Common Core, although these combinations did not consistently result in adequate provision for all students. The specific outcomes for grades, groups and students' attainment levels in the curriculum review process were not clearly articulated. At the Kindergarten level the curriculum was subject to ongoing review through formal procedures.
- UAE social studies was integrated in the curriculum of the school. It was more evident in the Arabic curriculum. Students studied quotes from 'My Vision' and related those quotes to their personal lives. Students also discussed the UAE space programme and the mission to Mars, and related it to the UAE vision 2021.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum adaptation	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Good


- The curriculum adequately met the educational needs of most learners, particularly in the Kindergarten. Resources and planning were in place to support students with SEND; however, there were few curricular resources designed to serve the gifted and the talented students. The IB curriculum provided more challenge for the stronger students in the High school. In the Kindergarten, children were both supported and challenged by their respective curricula.
- Essential knowledge, understanding and skills were promoted through innovation and enterprise. Creativity was evident within the curriculum, especially in Kindergarten and Elementary lessons. At each phase of the school, students were provided a range of supplemental academic and extra- curricular activities aimed at developing their interests. Limited connections between these activities and the provision in the classrooms were apparent.
- The school made strategic efforts to develop students' knowledge of the UAE's cultural values. Teachers, leaders and students incorporated regional heritage and international learning into the curriculum across the school.
- In Kindergarten 2 the school offered five 40-minute sessions per week of Arabic instruction to all Arab and non-Arab students in separate classrooms. The curriculum was designed to meet the needs of both native and non-native speakers.

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

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

- The school had established an environment that was safe for children, with detailed child protection procedures to follow should an incident occur. The policy included mandatory reporting requirements for the staff and provided guidelines for responding to the disclosure by a child. Staff members were trained each year to ensure compliance with the reporting procedures. Parents were also informed of the policy. A 'zero tolerance' policy against bullying and cyber bullying was in place. Student discussion sessions were conducted to prevent bullying or intervene should it occur on campus.
- Students were well supervised and protected when transported to and from the school on properly outfitted buses, using seat belts and other safety precautions. A full time medical staff maintained a clinic on campus, providing students and their families with health care, medications, screenings, and support at athletic practices and events.
- The school maintained a large and well equipped campus providing an excellent learning environment for students. Accurate and secure records were kept, to document the upkeep of equipment, buildings, and facilities.
- The school had excellent facilities that were welcoming and safe for all students and the staff. Ramps and elevators provided easy access for those who needed it.


- Healthy living was an important focus of the school. Food safety and nutritious menu choices were promoted by the cafeteria. The physical education instructors taught healthy attitudes, nutrition, sports, and science, following the standards of the Society of Health and Physical Educators.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Care and support	Very good 	Good	Good	Good

- Positive relationships among the staff and students created a calm and positive atmosphere for most on campus. Students were very polite in their interactions with the staff and with adults in general.
- A strong attendance management supported high rates of attendance by the students.
- The school had adopted a new model of intervention for identifying and supporting students with SEND. Students requiring more support at Tier 2 were moved to Tier 3 and provided with individual education plans (IEPs).
- A few students with moderate special educational needs were admitted. No students with severe special educational needs and disabilities were admitted for enrolment. The school did not identify students who were gifted or talented.
- A strong counseling staff had adopted the International Model for School Counseling Programs to successfully support all students by a proactive approach.
- The career counselor provided advice and guidance through the process of applying to colleges and universities within the UAE and abroad. More remained to be done to ensure that students' skills and aspirations were developed in line with their expectations so that the number of higher education choices after graduation could be expanded.

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

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

Good 

- Senior leaders and governors demonstrated a commitment to inclusion. This was evident in their investment in teacher recruitment, professional and strategic development and school improvement plans. The school's recently enhanced systems and structures had improved the quality of education for students with SEND.
- Learning support teachers used a variety of assessment tools and referenced their student's individual diagnostic assessments to accurately identify students with SEND. This information was used to plan support that was appropriate to the needs of each individual student.
- Parents were kept informed of the progress of their children in classrooms through the IEP meetings held each term and informally. Information about their achievement in academics, as well as their personal development was covered in the planning process. More remained to be done regarding the consistency of these plans, their implementation and the identification of the next academic steps.
- In lessons, curriculum modification for students with SEND was evident in the daily instructional plans of most classroom teachers, and by the personalized support provided.

- Students with SEND were monitored and tracked to indicate their rates of progress. Consequently, most achieved well. However, given the relatively mild needs of most students, progress rates could still improve further.

6. Leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership

Good

- An ambitious vision for Universal American School to be a high performing US curriculum school had been established following the arrival of the new director. A new leadership team was being put in place. There was a focus on accountability, evidence based self-evaluation and high expectations for the whole school community. The national priorities of the UAE were included. A way to measure the leaders' success in implementing their vision was required.
- Leaders at all levels worked effectively together. However, more time was required to embed key leadership posts in order to fulfil their collective vision. The performance outcomes linked to the high educational standards aspired to, were still emerging in many aspects of the school's work.
- A culture of high expectations was being successfully nurtured by the most senior leaders, led by the director. There were sustainable improved outcomes across many areas of the school, for example, the promotion of literacy as a tool for improvement. This was particularly true in the Arabic program.
- A majority of leaders across the different subjects and phases understood their responsibility to achieve the highest learning outcomes for students. Precise articulation of these learning outcomes for all groups of learners was in place. Leaders used data to build instructional capacity through accountability, evidence of improvement and curriculum clarity, all carried out better in the Kindergarten. This work across the rest of the school was ongoing.
- High expectations for learners as the standard in the school had been established. This was supported through self-evaluation and data about teaching quality in many areas of the school.
- The school was compliant with its statutory obligations.

School self-evaluation and improvement planning

Very good ↑

- Rigor and breadth defined the improved processes that were in place for self-evaluation. The school knew itself very well and had distributed responsibility among almost all leaders appropriately. Leaders had developed comprehensive professional development, support and accountability channels for the teaching to improve. This was a challenge for the few teachers not sufficiently familiar with the curriculum direction of the school.
- Regular monitoring of teaching and learning was a professional expectation in all phases and subject areas. This was developed through a 'coach and appraisal' format. While sustained improvement in students' achievements were emerging, the levels of challenge and support required were not always appropriate because some teachers lacked the ability to provide these.

- A collective approach to how the school community planned for improvement was in place. Several disparate plans had been refined into one coherent document that identified the key strategies required for overall improvements in teaching, learning and the curriculum. This process had taken UAE's national priorities into account. Leaders understood how these priorities aligned with the new higher expectations being set out.
- While sustained improvement in students' achievement were emerging, the school had not fully addressed all the recommendations from the previous inspection report. The implementation of those recommendations was well under way and improvements were seen in teacher monitoring, Arabic language outcomes and the provision for students with SEND.

Partnerships with parents and the community

Outstanding

- A wide range of channels were in place to seek parental opinion, analyze it and use it to nurture effective partnerships, targeting students' achievements. Such partnerships assisted the development of meaningful planning around, for example the inclusion of students with SEND. Parents appreciated the inclusion of their voices and participated enthusiastically in the many events and programs offered to develop a genuine school community.
- Parents were regularly and systematically invited to participate in their children's learning development. Many embraced these offers and students benefited from the very effective and clear communication between their homes and the school.
- Qualitative and relevant information was offered through the reporting process at regular times during the year. Families received detailed accounts of students' achievements across a holistic spectrum of expectations. Parents were aware of the next steps to be taken and were clear about their roles.
- The school built upon local partnerships with the parent body and used successful strategies in national and international context. Relevant and purposeful partnerships were in place regarding Emirati and global cultural developments. Charitable causes were supported through the pursuit of innovative, action-based projects directly connected to students' learning.

Governance




Very good ↑

- Governors had increased their accessibility to the school community through focused surveys, regular attendance at events and the Culture and Climate Committee.
- Through a targeted recruitment strategy, governors had exerted a positive influence on the long-term performance of the school.
- Governors held senior leaders to account through very regular monitoring of the progress made towards the goal of excellent teaching and learning. However, measurement of the progress made by senior leaders over time was imprecise. While some aspects of the school's performance had improved, the knowledge of governors of how their vision would be fully realized was underdeveloped.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The campus space was used effectively. Almost no space was unavailable for the provision of learning and teaching. This efficiency was best seen in the ways math, science and language students used open public spaces regularly for their activities. • Excellent literacy, technology, sensory and aesthetic resources were available throughout the school. Astute planning ensured that there was access to ample, current materials to support learners and teachers. • The entire school community worked together to create a highly efficient learning campus from day to day. This seamless operation of school life ensured that teachers and students could, when sufficiently able and focused, make the most of the opportunities afforded by this very positive feature of the school. • Significant numbers of new teachers and leaders were becoming more established under the close supervision of the director. Not yet complete, the new team was setting achievable but very challenging goals for teaching, assessment, the curriculum and as a result higher student achievements. The staff members were deployed effectively to deliver successfully on many of the school's priorities during this period of transition. 	

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 judgements. 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	230
	2014-2015	197
 Teachers	101	
 Students	102	

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

- Most parents, teachers and senior students reported satisfaction with the overall quality of education.
- They cited the strong progress made in English, math and science in particular.
- Most students reported that they were doing well learning Arabic as an additional language while only a majority expressed similar levels of satisfaction with Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language.
- Almost all parents indicated that their children enjoyed school.
- Almost all respondents believed that safety in the school was good.
- A small majority of students reported that safety on buses and bullying were occasionally problematic.
- Most parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the leadership whereas only a majority of students and teachers did.
- Most teachers and parents reported satisfaction with the provision for special educational needs and disabilities, the quality of the reports to parents and the learning environment.
- Most students expressed satisfaction with the feedback from teachers on what they needed to do to improve.

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