

INSPECTION REPORT

Al Maaref Private School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Maaref Private School (LLC)

Location	Al Qusais
Type of school	Private
Website	www.almaaref.ae
Telephone	04-2988881
Address	Al Qusais, Oman Street, P.O. Box 87823
Principal	Mohamed Fliti
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 years/ Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1737
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	633 (35%)
Date of the inspection	24th to 27th November 2013

Contents

The context of the school	3
Overall school performance 2013-2014	4
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
Progress since the last inspection	5
Trend of overall performance.....	5
How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?	6
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are teaching and assessment?.....	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?	8
How well does the school protect and support students?	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
How well does the school provide for Emirati students?.....	14
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	15
How well does the school teach Arabic as a first language?.....	15
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	16
What happens next?	17
How to contact us	17

The context of the school

Al Maaref Private School is located in Al Qusais. It provided education from Kindergarten to Grade 12, age three to 18 years. The English and mathematics programmes were broadly based on the US Common Core Standards, while the science program followed the Californian State standards. All three were taught in English. Islamic Education and Arabic followed UAE Ministry of Education guidelines and, in common with a range of other subjects, were taught in Arabic. The school used the Australian Council for Educational Research test in Grades 3, 6, 7, 9 and 10 to establish each student's attainment level nationally and internationally in relation to their age and the average for their grade.

At the time of the inspection there were 1737 students on the roll, an increase compared with the previous year. The largest nationality was Emirati, comprising just over one third of the school population. Other Arab nationals made up about the same proportion. There were separate boys and girls classes from Grade 5 to Grade 12. The school had identified 36 students who had a special educational need. These students were given only minimal support in their classroom learning.

The school had 81 teachers, 32 of whom were new to the school this year. Almost all had appropriate academic qualifications but many, particularly those in Kindergarten, lacked appropriate teaching qualifications and experience. They were supported by 18 teaching assistants. Two social advisors, a doctor and two nurses supported students' wellbeing. The Principal and a number of the senior leadership team had been in post for just over one year.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The good attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a First language in the middle school;
- The good attitudes and behaviour and understanding of Islamic values of students in all phases;
- The good provision for health and safety across all phases.

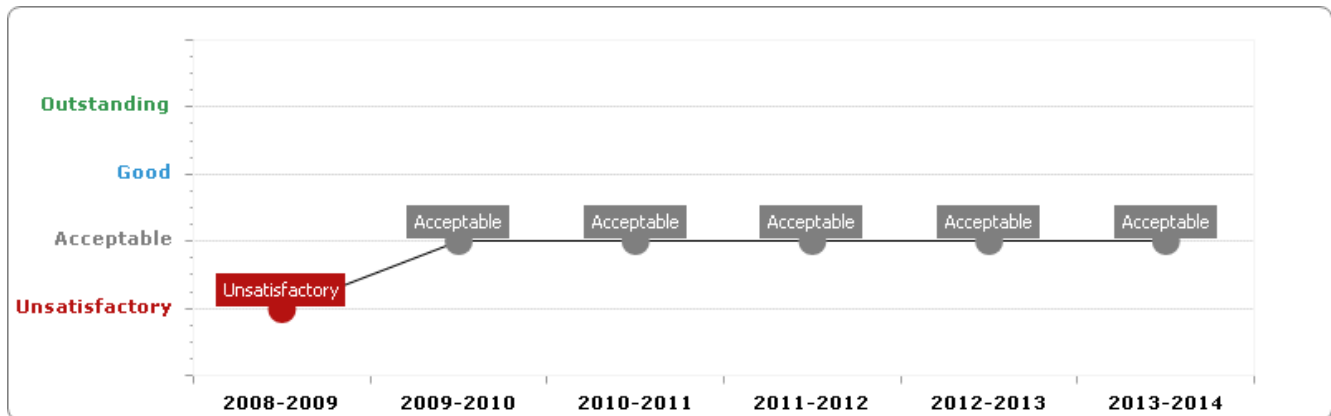
Recommendations

- Improve leadership to ensure improvement across all phases of the school;
- Improve all aspects of provision in the Kindergarten;
- Design the curriculum to meet the individual needs of students better;
- Improve the accuracy of assessment data analysis and the use of school and international benchmarks in its interpretation and evaluation;
- Design and implement a targeted annual action plan based upon the outcomes of a comprehensive school-wide self-review process;
- Provide staff in all phases with professional development. This should include training to ensure lessons include more opportunities for students to create, collaborate, communicate, think critically and learn independently.

Progress since the last inspection

- Improvement in middle school Islamic Education
- A newly established governance board with clear aims and objectives;
- Some additional resources purchased, but too few to impact significantly on students' learning.

Trend of overall performance



جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي
Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[Read paragraph](#)

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي
Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in English, mathematics and science was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten. In other phases attainment in all key subjects was acceptable except for Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language in the middle school where it was good. In Islamic Education most students' skills of recitation and memorisation of surahs from the Holy Qur'an reached expected standards. In the secondary phase, students had adequate knowledge of the various forms of worship such as prayer, zakat, hajj and Islamic rules of marriage and divorce. In Arabic as a first language, students had secure listening skills. In speaking, they could express their views in standard Arabic with reasonable accuracy and fluency. Students' oral reading was stronger than their comprehension. Writing was the least developed skill; students made mistakes in spelling, grammar, and word choice. In English in Kindergarten almost every lesson consisted of "say and repeat" rote learning. In all other phases students' speaking and reading skills were in line with those expected of second language learners. Extended writing was less well developed. In mathematics, kindergarten children were not attaining well enough in calculation and shape, space and measurement. Grade 1 students were working at Kindergarten levels but students in Grades 5, 7 and 8 were at expected curriculum levels. Elsewhere most students' attainment was below international expectations. In science in Kindergarten, children's skills in exploration and their understanding of the world were underdeveloped. In the elementary phase, students' observation skills were acceptable but their levels of understanding were low. In higher phases, their abilities to research, carry out science projects and engage in independent learning were restricted because there were too few resources, including Information communication technology and library reference material.

Progress in all key subjects in all phases mirrored that of attainment, except in middle school Arabic as an additional language in which progress was unsatisfactory. In Islamic Education progress was better in the girls' section especially in their increasing abilities to explain Islamic culture. In Arabic as a first language, most students made better progress in listening and responding skills than in other aspects of the language. Students' progress in speaking standard Arabic was variable. Progress in the development of writing skills was restricted as there were too few opportunities for extended writing and for writing for a variety of purposes. Progress in English in Kindergarten was slow because lessons were repetitive in content and lacked rigour. By Grade 12 most students had an acceptable vocabulary range but progress in reading and writing was slow. Progress in mathematics was not consistent across all aspects of the curriculum. The development of mental mathematical skills was a weakness in the elementary phase. Boys' progress in all grades was significantly limited by inappropriate teaching strategies. Progress in science in all phases was limited to acquiring basic facts. At the high school phase, progress was better. Laboratory practical lessons enhanced learning but, overall, progress remained well below the capacity of the students.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning skills was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and acceptable in all other phases. Most kindergarten children could not sustain long periods of engagement and few could talk about what they were doing. They were given few opportunities to work collaboratively or investigate and find out things for themselves. In other phases students were occasionally active in their learning and took responsibility for it. They responded to teachers' instructions but they were mainly restricted to being passive listeners, observers or participants with unchallenging activities. When given opportunities they could work collaboratively but their skills of independent thinking and independence were underdeveloped. Overall levels of understanding were lower than their levels of knowledge. Students' abilities to apply their learning to unfamiliar contexts was not a feature in any phase.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Student's attitudes and behaviour were good across all phases both in class and around the school. Almost all students had a strong sense of responsibility and could make age appropriate decisions for themselves. Their behaviour was respectful and they had positive interactions with their teachers. Almost all interactions between students were considerate and appropriate. Levels of cooperation were high. Older students frequently assisted those who were younger. Almost all were aware of the need to have a healthy life style and most made sincere efforts to follow the school's advice. Attendance overall was good but too many students arrived late at the beginning of the school day.

Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness were good across the school. Kindergarten children were enthusiastic participants in related activities. Across other phases, most students demonstrated a clear understanding of Islamic values and their influences. They participated in Qur'an recitation in assemblies and sang the UAE national anthem with respect. All were high appreciative, respectful and caring of each other. Most had a strong knowledge of UAE heritage and culture and enjoyed celebrating the UAE National Day. All exhibited a good understanding of, and pride in, their own culture and country but a majority had insufficient knowledge of broader world cultures.

Community and environmental responsibility was acceptable across all phases. Most students were aware of their responsibilities within their classrooms and around the school. The recently formed School Council was beginning to offer students a voice in the development of the school. Students showed some initiative in making a few decisions for themselves but were not yet in a position to develop opportunities for involvement in the wider community. They had a growing understanding of environmental issues such as

water and energy conservation and recycling but few took the initiative to encourage environmental awareness and action across the school.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and acceptable in other phases. Some teachers knew their subjects well and had the ability and expertise to match what they taught to their students' ability levels. This was seldom the case in Kindergarten where only a few teachers planned lessons imaginatively or made good use of resources to enable their children to learn successfully. Across the school, the quality of planned learning objectives was variable. Not all teachers helped students to understand what they were to learn during a lesson. Most teachers chose a didactic teaching style that relied heavily on teacher-talk and textbooks. Only a minority allowed active debate, dialogue, practical activities, problem solving and independent research. Better teaching, for example, in Arabic in Grade 12, facilitated active group discussions. Overall, teaching strategies did not meet the needs of all students. Those with; special educational needs and special talents did not consistently have their learning needs met. Teaching was not planned well enough for different age groups and different genders.

The quality of assessment was unsatisfactory across the school. The school had not responded sufficiently to the recommendations from the previous inspection report. Some teachers knew their students well and had some knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. Most teachers gave encouraging and positive oral feedback to students about the quality of their work but often there was insufficient detail to help students make better progress. There was no established assessment system to monitor the achievements of students or track their progress. Teachers could not identify what students had learned and did not involve them in evaluating their learning. Assessment information was not used by teachers to modify their planning to ensure that the needs of all students were being met. The school had not made use of its international benchmark data to identify areas requiring improvement and modify its curriculum accordingly.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and acceptable in other phases. The kindergarten curriculum lacked balance. There were insufficient planning and significant omissions from the stated curriculum. Children were prevented from becoming active and independent learners. In other phases the curriculum had a clear rationale. It was generally broad and balanced with an adequate range of subjects. However, there was limited choice, particularly for students in the middle and high school phases. The

curriculum was recently reviewed. In higher phases, major gaps were identified and rectified, overlaps eliminated, and planning for had been improved. Healthy living provision was appropriately incorporated. Students' work was aligned to appropriate US standards but students' learning needs were seldom considered when the curriculum was being planned and delivered. Across all subjects there were too few opportunities for independent learning, research and development of enquiry skills. There were a few cross-curricular links but these were not coordinated or effectively planned. Transition arrangements required improvement. The curriculum did not equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure their smooth progression up the school. Extra-curricular activities were restricted to clubs on Tuesdays and a few infrequent events, competitions, and field visits. Community links were not well planned and had little impact on students' learning.

The curriculum design to meet individual needs was unsatisfactory across all phases. There was little effective modification, although the school recognised that there were students with special educational needs (SEN) in most classes. The SEN leaders were attempting to support teachers by developing individual education plans (IEPs) for students. Overall these were ineffective because they provided only limited guidance on the learning needs of these students. Students in Grades 11 and 12 were offered limited subject choice.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for health and safety was good in all phases. The school had good systems in place including frequent and thorough checks to ensure that a healthy and safe environment was maintained. There were high levels of supervision around the school and on school transport. Buildings and equipment were well maintained and kept to an appropriate standard of repair. Evacuation practices were regular and thoroughly evaluated. Good records existed of all students' health checks, support, incidents and actions. The promotion of healthy living was a regular part of the curriculum in all phases. A well designed behavioural policy set expectations for good behaviour and responsibility. Anti-bullying and intimidation policies were effective and reviewed annually. Internet dangers were outlined to students by the school's counsellor. A child protection policy was in place and staff and students were aware of protection procedures.

The quality of support was acceptable in all phases. Relationships between staff and students were mature and respectful. Teachers demonstrated high levels of care for their students. Behaviour was managed well and students were clear about the school behaviour policy and rules. Efficient systems were in place to monitor and keep track of students' personal well-being. Counsellors were available to listen and provide support when required. Trained medical staff supported those with health issues. Improved systems to offer careers guidance were being devised. Attendance and punctuality were monitored, but the analysis of data

was limited. Consequently, punctuality at the beginning of the day remained an issue. Students with special educational needs were admitted into the school and procedures to identify their needs were in their initial stages of implementation. Overall the progress of students with SEN was limited. There was insufficient individualised planning and support in lessons.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. There was an adequate understanding of the daily work of the senior phases of the school but an insufficient understanding of the learning requirements in Kindergarten and lower elementary phase and this restricted the school's ability to plan strategically and drive change effectively. There was also an inability to analyse internal and external assessment information. The vision for the school and its continuous improvement across all phases was restricted by poor communication and this resulted in a lack of clarity about overall direction. A distributive leadership model had been implemented, but some teachers in senior positions were still developing the necessary experience and expertise to support the required changes. A significant turnover of staff had had a negative effect on students' learning outcomes and school improvement. Nevertheless, the capacity to provide a better education for all students was developing. Relationships were improving. The school leaders did not manage the process of external evaluation effectively.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. The school had involved its staff but not other stakeholders in its self-evaluation process. Leaders were restricted in their effectiveness to determine the school's key strengths and weaknesses. There was a lack of rigour in the process. Valid and reliable processes of collecting, analysing and synthesising information were missing, which resulted in descriptive rather than evaluative outcomes. Consequently, critical targets were omitted from the school's improvement plan. Monitoring of teaching and learning occurred but processes and procedures lacked consistency across the school. Too little attention was placed on students' learning outcomes when teachers were observed. Teachers in Kindergarten and in Arabic were assessed using different criteria to other staff. Feedback from observations to teachers was restricted. Specific next steps for teacher improvement and support through targeted continuous professional development were absent. Leaders had had minimal success in addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection report.

Relationships with parents and the community were acceptable. There was some opportunity for parental involvement through the school's Parents' Advisory Board and during parent evenings, but minimal participation in the school's self-evaluation process. Parents stressed the regularity of communication which supported student engagement but the school's formal report cards had insufficient information to support

the next steps for students' learning. There was a lack of responsiveness when parents had concerns. There were a few links with other schools and the local community.

Governance was acceptable. The lack of parental and community stake holders on the governing board was being addressed. The principal communicated with the board through emails, telephone and conference calls when face-to-face meetings could not occur. There were plans for a wider range of views to become incorporated into governance with some opportunity for parents to have direct influence in the decision making process. Holding the school to account for its performance and quality was a developing feature. Consultants were evaluating school performance data and reporting directly to the board. The board had recently provided additional ICT resources but these were not sufficiently well used to improve the quality of students' learning. Overall the school was under-resourced.

Management including staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. The day-to-day operation of the school was well understood by all. The school had attempted to ensure more consistent systems and had made attempts to improve levels of punctuality, to streamline the timetabling and to reduce loss of lesson time. They had been partially successful. There had been a significantly large turnover of staff. Currently there was an insufficient number of qualified and experienced staff in Kindergarten to ensure that the learning needs of a sizable portion of the school were met. Premises were adequate. Resources for learning were insufficient in Kindergarten, in English and in mathematics across all phases. The school had insufficient Arabic, English and science reference texts to support independent research.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students' attainment and progress was variable across the school. In Kindergarten, attainment was unsatisfactory overall. Too many students were restricted in their opportunities to explore and understand their world, interact to develop social skills and develop the first elements of their literacy and numeracy skill knowledge and understanding. In Arabic and Islamic Education, attainment was at least good in middle school Arabic but acceptable elsewhere. In other key subjects attainment in elementary, middle and high was acceptable overall. Across all phases in all key subjects Emirati girls out-performed boys. This was also confirmed by their scores in international benchmark testing. Overall Emirati boys' and girls' average marks were lower than their peers, particularly in the elementary phase. Punctuality was an issue for many in the morning. Too many Emirati boys and girls arrived at the school late. They missed valuable learning time and opportunities to share with the school their National Anthem and Islamic values during assemblies.

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

Students with special educational needs (SEN) made acceptable progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language. In English, mathematics and science progress was unsatisfactory. The school had admissions and SEN policies but the information on student needs was limited. All students were assessed on entry to the school but the procedures were not sufficiently secure to ensure early identification. Teachers usually identified those whose progress fell behind others. This resulted in additional assessments but the assessment lacked specificity of detail. Students who had been identified with SEN made limited progress in most lessons as there was no established procedure to ensure work set by teachers matched their learning needs. The levels of support provided were limited because of a lack of understanding of students' specific needs. In almost all classes students were provided with the same tasks as other class members. Individual educational plans were in place for most identified students. Students' progress was monitored through whole school internal tests but the outcomes of the tests were too vague to help teachers determine the next learning steps. Curriculum modification did not occur.

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

Almost all teachers of Arabic as a first language demonstrated strong subject knowledge. Their understanding of how students of different age groups and levels of skill learned was in its early stages of development. Teachers often planned and delivered lessons using teaching strategies that did not promote a balanced development of different language skills. Teaching was frequently didactic with lessons dominated by excessive teacher talk, direction and control. Opportunities for active independent learning were restricted. Most lessons had clear learning objectives but these often lacked challenge and did not promote sustained progress. Teachers occasionally used whole class discussions but these engaged few active participants and did not always support higher-order and critical thinking development.

The curriculum was heavily restricted to delivering the textbook activities. A few teacher-developed materials were used but these did not always provide meaningful and balanced learning experiences. Students' language skills were not stretched. Teachers did not cater adequately for high and low achieving students or those with special educational needs.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

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

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	113	11%
	Last year	55	7%
Teachers	34		42%
Students	28		16%

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

A few parents and students and a minority of teachers responded to surveys. Most parents were happy with the quality of the education their children were receiving. A minority of parents did not agree that there had been improvements in the school facilities and their children's learning, or that their children were making good progress in Arabic as a first language. About half of parents and a third of students felt that teachers' comments and suggestions helped learning. Similar numbers felt that the school did not have a sufficiently wide range of technology tools to support learning. A minority of students considered that behaviour in the school was less than good and that the school did not prepare them well enough for the next stages of their education and lives. They said that the choice of subjects was too limited and the school did not modify its curriculum to meet their needs. A majority of teachers thought student behaviour was good.

What happens next?

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

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

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

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

Copyright © 2014

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