

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai International Academy

Report published in April 2013

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai International Academy

Location	Emirates Hills
Type of school	Private
Website	www.diadubai.com
Telephone	04-368-4111
Address	P.O. Box 118111, Dubai
Principal	Julian Wilcock
Curriculum	IB
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Year 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1,893
Largest nationality group of Students	Indian
Number of Emirati students	20 (1%)
Date of the inspection	4th to 7th February 2013

Contents

The context of the school.....	3
Overall school performance 2012-2013.....	4
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
Progress since the last inspection	5
Trend of overall performance.....	5
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	6
How good is the students' personal and social development?	7
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	8
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	8
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	8
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	9
How well does the school provide for Emirati students?.....	10
How good is the students' personal and social development?	10
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	11
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	12
How well does the school protect and support students?.....	12
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	13
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	13
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	15
What happens next?	16
How to contact us	16

The context of the school

Dubai International Academy is a three-programme International Baccalaureate (IB) school located in Emirates Hills. There were 1,893 girls and boys ranging from three to 18 years of age attending the school at the time of the inspection, representing a highly multi-cultural and multi-national population. Seventy-eight nationalities were represented in the school population. Twenty Emirati students were enrolled in the school.

The school delivered the Primary Years Programme (PYP, from Kindergarten to Year 6), the Middle Years Programme (MYP, from Year 7 to 11) and the Diploma Programme (DP, Years 12 and 13) covering the entire IB range. Students took the Higher Level and Standard Level DP courses as well as the Diploma Studies courses.

The school had just appointed a quality assurance director in January 2013. The leadership team supported 214 teachers, of a total staff of 254, which included teachers for students with special educational needs (SEN) and English as a second language (ESL). Twenty assistant teachers supported teachers in each Kindergarten classroom and the younger students in the PYP classes. The school had received accreditation visits from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and the Council of International Schools during the current academic year.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

Key strengths

- The good or better attainment and progress by students in English, mathematics and science;
- Students' outstanding personal and social development;
- The good teaching and learning in all phases of the school;
- The outstanding provision by the school for the curriculum and students' health and safety;
- The high quality of support provided to students in all phases of the school.

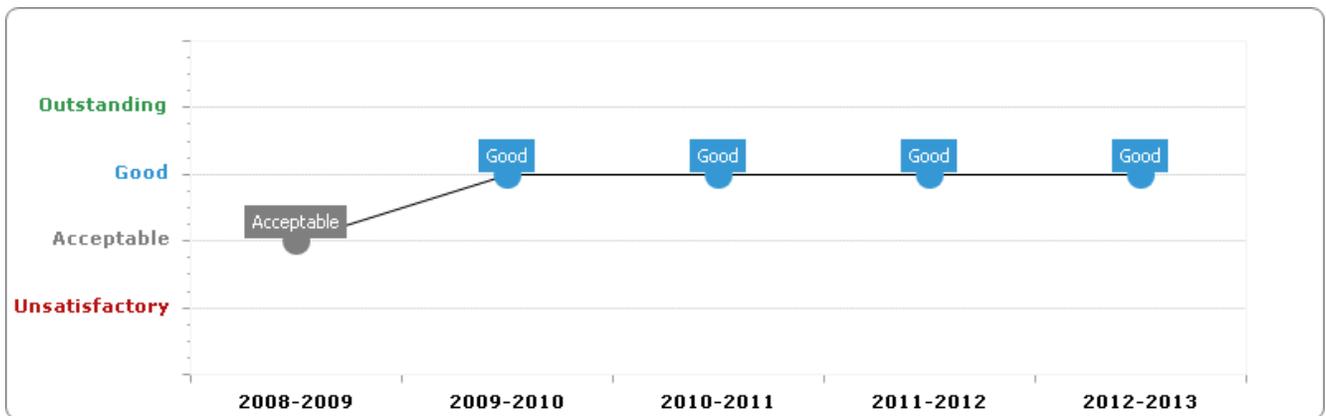
Recommendations

- Raise students' attainment in primary Islamic Education and in Arabic in the PYP and MYP phases;
- Provide more opportunities for students to initiate personal investigations and develop higher order thinking skills;
- Ensure consistency in interpreting and applying the assessment information in all phases;
- Ensure that all leaders address the priorities identified for improvement consistently;
- Adopt a more accurate approach to self-evaluation.

Progress since the last inspection

- There was outstanding progress in English by children in the Kindergarten;
- There was improved community and environmental responsibility by children in the Kindergarten and students in the MYP phase;
- There was an improved quality of support given to students in the DP phase;
- There was lower student attainment and slower progress in Arabic as a first and second language in the MYP phase.

Trend of overall performance



How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Good	Good	Good	Good

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

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Curriculum quality	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	PYP	MYP	DP
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?

Attainment in the key subjects was mostly good across the phases. It was acceptable in Islamic Education in the PYP, and good in the MYP and DP phases. Most students knew and were able to explain the six pillars of faith, worship, Seerah and Islamic concepts above expectations. However, their Qur'an recitation skills were still underdeveloped. In Arabic as a first language, students' attainment was acceptable in both the PYP and MYP phases, and good in the DP phase. Most students could speak with different levels of confidence using the Arabic language. Their reading and comprehension skills were stronger in the DP phase. However, across all phases, the quality of writing and applying grammar into the language were weak. In Arabic as an additional language, attainment was acceptable in all phases. Most students were able to listen and respond to familiar greetings. They were able to take part in simple conversations about basic personal information. Reading familiar sentences was challenging for the majority of students and their writing skills were underdeveloped. Attainment in English was good in all phases. In the MYP and DP phases, students achieved good levels on external examinations. Attainment in mathematics was good across all phases. Children in the Kindergarten were able to count in order to 20 and could recognise, create and describe patterns. Most students in the PYP phase were becoming competent users of mathematic language and recognised the processes of constructing, transferring and applying in mathematics. Attainment in science was good across all phases. The strongest achievement was shown by students in the DP phase, particularly the higher level students. Students could do research, conduct investigations and discuss their findings. Nevertheless, critical thinking and enquiry skills were not routinely developed in all science lessons.

Students' progress was mostly good. In Islamic Education, progress was acceptable in the PYP phase and good in the other phases. A majority of students developed their understanding of Hadith, Fiqh and miracles of The Holy Qur'an above expected levels. In Arabic as a first language, students' progress was acceptable within the PYP and MYP phases; there was a lack of challenge in lessons. Students' presentation skills in the DP were particularly strong and students made good progress. Limited progress was evident in communication using standard Arabic. The quality of writing and the application of grammar to language across all phases was underdeveloped. In Arabic as an additional language, students' progress was acceptable. Students made slower progress compared to other foreign languages in the school, where the teachers' expectations of them were higher. In English, students for whom English was an additional language made outstanding progress from their starting points at the beginning of Kindergarten. Progress in mathematics was good across all phases; MYP students had developed a good grounding in mathematical theory. Diploma students were developing complex mathematical knowledge at a high level. This was evident in the quality of their enquiry and critical thinking skills. In science, progress was good across all phases.

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

The majority of students had developed good knowledge and the capacity to explain their understanding. However, students' capacity to enquire, critically analyse, and think deeply about science was inconsistent. Students with special educational needs made good progress relative to their starting points.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The attainment and progress of Emirati students was similar to that of other students in the school; they attained above the expected levels in English, mathematics and science and at expected levels in Islamic Education and Arabic. Their progress through the school was good. Students worked well in classes and were highly motivated, so they made good progress. Some students made outstanding progress. They had very positive attitudes and their behaviour was exemplary. All Emirati students enjoyed school and felt stimulated by the school environment. They were completely integrated in all classes and their progress was tracked in the same way. They appreciated the internationalism of the school, which enabled them to learn more about other cultures. They were all proud of their country and enjoyed being representatives of the UAE in their classes. In addition, they enjoyed being resourceful to teachers in lessons and discussions. Older students were aware that the school opened up opportunities for them such as continuing their education overseas.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal and social development was mostly outstanding. The students had very positive and responsible attitudes. Their behaviour was exemplary both inside and outside the classrooms. Their relationships with other students and adults were very respectful and considerate. Students showed genuine concern for others and could take the lead in relating to others, both socially and in their school work. They were able to resolve problems in mature ways. All students demonstrated an excellent understanding of healthy living and were aware of the benefits of keeping fit. Students showed their initiative in a number of ways, such as starting healthy cooking clubs and setting up friendship benches around the school. In the lower year groups, most students demonstrated acceptable or good understanding of Islamic values. When asked, they could give examples of how Islam encouraged Muslims to help the poor countries in Asia and Africa through "Dubai Cares". The multi-cultural nature of the school enabled most students to understand the subtleties of cultural differences. This was particularly the case in the older classes, where students led international reunions and debates.

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Most students showed great respect and understanding of the heritage of Dubai, but initiatives for Emirati students to promote their local culture were still underdeveloped. Students across all phases demonstrated exceptional levels of loyalty and commitment to their school. Their involvement in the local community was limited compared to that with the global community. They knew the value of taking personal responsibility, from the youngest to the school council members. They embraced the frequent opportunities to take leadership roles, especially in recycling projects and the 'Eco-club', which affected other students' daily lives positively. They had an excellent work ethic. The students were growing organic fruit and vegetables, to be used in the Cooking Club. Subsequently, they were presented as healthy meals to the school's support staff.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was good throughout the school. Most teachers had secure subject knowledge, which they used well to engage students' interests. Most teachers had good understanding of how to teach younger people. Lesson planning was good, but a minority of lessons lacked sufficient challenge. The range of teaching strategies was wide. Despite improvements in lesson planning, teaching in Islamic Education and Arabic was weaker than in the other key subjects. Lessons did not consistently cater for the needs of all students. Subject knowledge was too varied in Islamic Education lessons in the PYP phase. Teachers' understanding of how students learn was weaker in Arabic lessons. The specific focus on the teaching of English in all lessons in the Kindergarten had resulted in rapid improvement, especially in children's reading and writing skills. The development of critical thinking and enquiry skills was limited because it was not central to all lessons.

Learning was good throughout the school. Students had mature and confident approaches to their work. Interactions with teachers enabled students to deepen their understanding, but there were more limited opportunities for discussions with peers. In a minority of lessons, opportunities to enquire were infrequent and this limited the development of critical thinking skills and the habit of independent learning. Students enjoyed showing what they had learned to parents and their peers. Consequently, they took more responsibility for certain aspects of their learning. In most lessons, students connected their learning well to the real world, especially in science and in the Kindergarten. Research skills were developed well throughout the school. For example, students of all ages confidently used information and communication technology for research. In Islamic Education and Arabic, students had difficulty concentrating. This was a consequence of the quality of teaching.

The assessment of learning was good in all phases. Good systems were in place to monitor students' attainment against clear criteria. However, the use of assessment information to inform planning was varied. In the Kindergarten, daily assessments were used to adjust lessons to meet the needs of children and to

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

target extra support. This type of assessment was less evident in other phases and subjects. Across the school, teachers knew students' strengths and areas for development well. In the DP phase, teachers provided detailed written and verbal guidance which helped students improve their work. Self-assessment was developed well; students were aware of how well they were progressing

[View judgements](#)

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

The school provided an outstanding curriculum that embodied the values of the International Baccalaureate Organisation. It was broad and balanced and met the needs of all students. The curriculum was carefully planned within each programme and between the three programmes to ensure continuity and progression. A review process showed the on-going commitment of the school to cater for the educational needs of all students. In the PYP, the five essential elements of knowledge, skills, conceptual understanding, attitudes and action were the focus of each unit of inquiry. This provided students with clear structures for learning on a wide range of topics. In the DP phase, senior students were engaged in the 'Community Action Service' programme to engage with local and global communities. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities enriched the educational experiences students.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for students' health, safety and security were outstanding across all phases of the school. The buildings were well-maintained and provided a safe environment for students, staff and visitors. Regular fire drills were carried out so that all students knew what to do in an emergency. The safe arrival and departure of students was extremely well organised and managed. School facilities were excellent and met the needs of all students. The emphasis on healthy lifestyles was evident and effectively supported by the medical, canteen and teaching staff. Menus and lunch boxes were monitored to encourage healthy eating. Medical staff provided outstanding care and kept comprehensive, secure records. The school's policy and procedures for child protection were thorough, monitored and known by all staff. Students knew who to contact if they had any concerns.

The quality of support for students was outstanding across all phases. Staff members showed strong knowledge of, and interest in students. They managed students' behaviour supportively. Absenteeism and punctuality issues were dealt with effectively. There was a mentoring system for students in Years 12 and 13. The school provided regular and relevant advice on subject options and career guidance.

There was a strong focus on the care of new students in the DP and for high achievers to reach their full potential. A new careers counsellor supported older students.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students with special educational needs were welcomed into the school. There was a strong system for the identification of such students, particularly in the PYP and MYP phases. Learning support teachers were strategic in their support to enable the maximum progress for these students. Classroom teachers were aware and supportive of these students in their classes. The new gifted and talented programme was in the developmental stage.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The Director acted as Principal of the school. Responsibilities were distributed strategically. The leadership team was dedicated to raising learning outcomes. However, not all middle managers supported the senior leaders effectively. Priorities for improvement were shared at all levels, but the quality of their implementation varied between departments. For example, there was insufficient monitoring of the performance of the Islamic Education and Arabic department across the school.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were good. Action plans were in place and were aligned to the main school improvement plan. Progress reports from middle leaders were regular and they contributed to the progress seen in some areas of school. A few leaders were overly generous in their evaluation of the school's performance and did not take sufficient account of the available evidence. Nevertheless, the key leaders of the school had the capacity to improve, as demonstrated by the improvements in some aspects since the last inspection.

The partnership and communication with parents was outstanding. Parents were regularly informed about both the academic and personal development of their children.

There was a dynamic parent association which supported the school community spirit. Parents were very positive in their opinions about the quality of education provided by the school. Links with local businesses and the community were purposeful and varied.

They had positive effects upon students' learning and personal development. Governance of the school was good. The board of governors included educational experts and parents. It supported the leadership team well and shared the same vision of improvement. Governors were aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and sought the views of the parents, although there was limited opportunity for parents to influence decision-making. The governors held the school to account for its performance.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources were outstanding. Teachers were appropriately qualified and new recruits were supported well. The number of teaching assistants in school was growing and they were used effectively in lessons. Time for teachers to plan collaboratively was a commendable feature. Resources for learning such as information technology were rapidly growing in number. The library and the science laboratories were well equipped and they were used effectively to develop students' experimental skills.

[View judgements](#)

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	618	48%
	Last year	591	48%
Teachers	148		92%
Students	297		81%

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

Almost half of the parents responded to the survey, about the same as last year. Almost all of the teachers and most senior students responded to their surveys. Most of the parents acknowledged that they were satisfied with the support for students with special education needs. Students' progress in Islamic Education and Arabic was considered to be less than good. Teachers' responses were mostly positive. They cited the collegial work environment and the focus on professional development. Students' responses indicated that they were generally satisfied with the school.

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.

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How to contact us

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

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