



National Agenda



Early years



Special educational  
needs and disabilities



Innovation

## Inspection Report 2015-2016

The City School International Private

Curriculum: UK

Overall rating: Acceptable

Read more about the school



www.khda.gov.ae

‘Without  
challenges,  
we won’t feel  
the taste of  
success and  
happiness’



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

## Contents

School information .....	2
Summary for parents and the community .....	3
Main inspection report .....	10
1. Students' achievement .....	11
2. Students' personal and social development, and their innovation skills .....	15
3. Teaching and assessment .....	17
4. Curriculum .....	18
5. The protection, care, guidance and support of students .....	19
Provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) .....	21
6. Leadership and management .....	21
The views of the parents, teachers and students .....	24

## School information

### General information



Location	Nad Al Hamar
Type of school	Private
Opening year of school	2006
Website	www.tcs-uae.com
Telephone	04-2899722
Address	Dubai-Nad Al Hamar PO Box 5760
Principal	Kaneez-e-Ali
Language of instruction	English
Inspection dates	18 to 21 January 2016

### Students



Gender of students	Boys and girls
Age range	4-16
Grades or year groups	Foundation Stage 2 to Year 11
Number of students on roll	665
Number of children in pre-kindergarten	0
Number of Emirati students	12
Number of students with SEND	12
Largest nationality group of students	Pakistani

### Teachers / Support staff



Number of teachers	65
Largest nationality group of teachers	Pakistani
Number of teaching assistants	9
Teacher-student ratio	1:11
Number of guidance counsellors	2
Teacher turnover	23%

### Curriculum



Educational permit / Licence	UK
Main curriculum	UK
External tests and examinations	IGCSE, IBT, CAT4, CIE
Accreditation	None
National Agenda benchmark tests	IBT

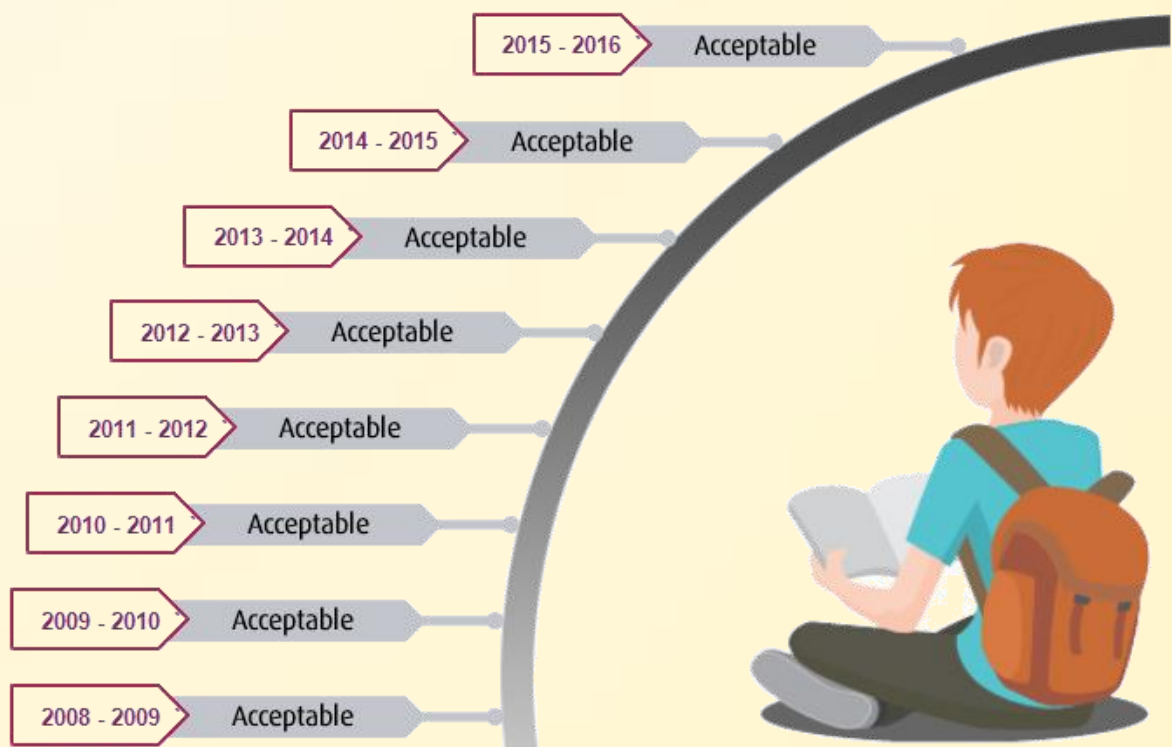


## Summary for parents and the community

**The City School International Private** was inspected by DSIB from 18 to 21 January 2016. The overall quality of education provided by the school was found to be **acceptable**.

In order to judge the overall quality of education provided by the school, inspectors considered six key standards of performance. Inspectors looked at children's attainment and progress in key subjects, their learning skills and their personal and social development. They judged how effective teaching and the assessment of learning were across the school. Inspectors considered how well the school's curriculum, including activities inside and outside classrooms, met the educational needs of all children. They judged how well the school protected and supported children. In addition inspectors judged the effectiveness of leadership and governance, including management, staffing, facilities and resources.

The inspection judgements were drawn from evidence gathered by the inspection team, including observing children learning in lessons, looking at their work, talking with children, meetings with the staff, parents and governors, and reviewing the parents', teachers' and senior students' surveys.





### How well did the school perform overall?

Overall, **the City School International Private** provided an **acceptable** quality of education for its students.

- Attainment in the Foundation Stage (FS) was good in English and science and had declined in mathematics. Progress in FS was consistently good in three out of the five core subjects. Attainment and progress in the primary and secondary phases were good or better in English, mathematics and science. It was outstanding in secondary science. In the secondary phase, progress had improved to a good level in Islamic education. Attainment in Arabic as a first language had improved but attainment in Arabic as an additional language remained weak. The quality of students' learning skills had improved in the secondary phase as a result of improved teaching.
- Across all phases, students were well behaved and had very good attitudes to their studies. Students in the secondary phase had a very good knowledge of Islamic values and Emirati heritage. They were well aware of environmental issues and took their responsibilities within the community seriously.
- Teachers' subject knowledge was generally secure. Most teachers created a safe and supportive learning environment. Lesson planning followed a common format across all phases, however, planning to meet the needs of students was not consistent. Assessment had improved in the secondary phase and was one of the key factors in the high levels of attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science.
- The curriculum had improved with additional outdoor learning for FS children and greater subject choices for secondary phase students. Although there had been enhancements to the secondary curriculum, the arrangements for teaching Arabic as an additional language remained weak.
- The school had improved procedures for safeguarding students through revisions to the child protection policy. The quality of care had been enhanced through the additional guidance that was being provided for students moving to the next stage of their education.
- Leadership and management procedures for monitoring school performance had improved and level of accuracy was developing as a result. Relationships with parents remained strong and the governing body continued to support the school.



### What did the school do well?

- The school leadership team had been successful in improving many aspects of school provision since the previous inspection.
- There had been improvements to teaching, assessment, curriculum design, and the development of student learning skills in the secondary phase. This had led to good and better performance by students in English, mathematics and science.
- Across all phases, students were self-disciplined and had very good attitudes to learning. Students in the secondary phase had a very high degree of knowledge of Islamic values, Emirati heritage, environmental awareness and social responsibility.
- The school had made further improvements to the already high levels of safety and welfare of all students.
- The students were well aware of the UAE priorities for 2021.





### What does the school need to do next?

- Raise attainment and improve the progress of students by:
  - effectively modifying the curriculum in Arabic as an additional language to better match the language proficiency of students in each class
  - continuing to develop the speaking and writing skills of students in Arabic
  - enhancing students' understanding of the Holy Qur'an and Hadeeth in Islamic education across all phases
  - reviewing the effectiveness of the practice of a one year FS programme.
- Improve the quality of teaching, especially but not exclusively, in the primary phase by:
  - accurately assessing students' prior knowledge and understanding
  - effectively using assessment to create appropriate learning objectives and tasks that are better matched to the needs of the different groups of students
  - providing greater opportunities for the development of students' skills, particularly with regard to independent learning
  - Giving sufficient emphasis to the appointment of new teachers who have the requisite subject knowledge and understanding of how students learn best.
- Improve the accuracy of school leaders' assessment of students' progress and evaluation of teachers' performance.



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

- Students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) made acceptable progress from their starting points in most subjects. Those with underdeveloped language skills benefitted from regular individualised support in small withdrawal groups. A few students did not make enough progress, as the tasks were not sufficiently structured to enable the systematic development of skills and understanding.
- The school made sure that parents were provided with the information they needed so that they knew how well their child was progressing. This included weekly communication from teachers and specialist staff to parents.
- The school worked closely with parents. Students benefitted from the strong partnership established. Parents valued the care and support provided for their child.
- The school involved parents fully in the identification process and in the design and review of their child's individual education plan. The school did not survey the views of parents when planning improvements to the services provided by the school.
- Parents valued the inclusive ethos in the school and felt that their children were happy at school. They appreciated the care and support provided as well as the opportunity to discuss any concerns they had with the specialist staff and teachers. A few parents requested more guidance from the school on how they could support their child at home.

### National Agenda Parameter



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

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

#### Main points:

- The school did not fully meet the registration requirements of the National Agenda Parameter. The attainment data was not sufficient to make a full judgement on the progress towards meeting National Agenda targets.
- The school leadership had informed all stakeholders and National Agenda was a discussion point within the school amongst teachers and students. The governors and parents were less well informed about how PISA and TIMSS testing had influenced the teaching, learning and curriculum.
- The school had reviewed the poor PISA and TIMSS results from 2011-2012. Subjects had incorporated amended content and skill development to improve the weaker areas. For example in mathematics effective problem solving had been incorporated from Year 1. The English curriculum had been modified but the implementation of the changes were less effective.
- The required adjustment to teaching was more effective in mathematics and science than in English and other subjects. In mathematics and science, it was built into the lesson planning and teaching, and used effectively to add challenge, develop higher order thinking and promote investigative skills.
- Students, in most lessons, had access to sufficient resources to carry out research. The school had a number of laptops and devices for student use. All students, from Year 5 upwards, were encouraged to bring their own devices to school. They were developing good research skills in most subjects although the validity and usefulness of the research frequently depended upon the quality and insightfulness of the questions posed by the teacher.

## 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 understood the importance of the national innovation agenda and could articulate how they were promoting a culture of innovation through the many curriculum opportunities provided, for example the 'Young Entrepreneurs Scheme', 'the Innovation Centre' and the 'Young Leaders Development Programme'. The school had appointed a leader of innovation to the school council. Innovation had been introduced as a core value in the previous year, and was a key driver in developing students' potential. In order to promote this aspect, leaders and teachers had responded to the innovation agenda by creating innovation learning zones. Teachers and leaders had started to inquire and research into the potential for innovation to improve their practices, a particularly strong feature found in science.



Overall school performance

Acceptable

1. Students' achievement

		Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
<b>Islamic education</b> 	Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Not applicable	Acceptable	Good ↑
<b>Arabic as a first language</b> 	Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable ↑
	Progress	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b> 	Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Weak
	Progress	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>English</b> 	Attainment	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	Good	Good	Good
<b>Mathematics</b> 	Attainment	Acceptable ↓	Good ↑	Very good ↑
	Progress	Good	Very good ↑	Very good ↑
<b>Science</b> 	Attainment	Good	Good	Outstanding ↑
	Progress	Good	Good	Outstanding ↑

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
<b>Learning skills</b>	Good	Acceptable	Good ↑

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Personal development	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Very good ↑
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good	Very good ↑	Outstanding ↑
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Good	Good	Very good ↑

## 3. Teaching and assessment

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Good ↑
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Good ↑

## 4. Curriculum

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum design and implementation	Very good ↑	Good	Very good ↑
Curriculum adaptation	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Very good ↑
Care and support	Good	Acceptable	Good ↑

## 6. Leadership and management

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



## Main inspection report

The Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) is responsible for inspecting and reporting on the standards reached by students and the quality of education provided in Dubai's private schools.

### Judgements are made on a six-point scale



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

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

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

## 1. Students' achievement

### Foundation Stage

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	Good	Good
Mathematics	Acceptable ↓	Good
Science	Good	Good

- Almost all children were learning English as an additional language and a significant number had been in the school for a few months only. The levels of their attainment and progress were slightly above those expected in these circumstances. Most groups of children were growing in confidence in speaking English to adults and to each other. They took an active part in assembly. Songs were used effectively for learning vocabulary and children developed their listening skills and pronunciation in an enjoyable way. They made good progress in writing skills and successfully built simple words using letter sounds. A few children made books for their friends and included sentences, attempting to spell unknown words from their knowledge of phonics.
- In mathematics, children understood age-appropriate number concepts and they achieved at expected levels for their age. Children generally were making good progress, particularly those who had joined this year and had only been in school for a short time. They counted accurately to ten and matched numbers to objects. Most children could add two numbers together and record their answers. They named colours and sorted objects into groups. They took part in activities to link their learning to the real world by counting money to pay for items in a class shop. Different groups made progress at similarly good levels.
- Children were developing an increasing range of skills in science. Generally, their attainment was slightly above expected levels and they made good progress. They planted seeds, observed how they needed water to grow and named the parts of plants. Their wide vocabulary enabled them to talk about science activities such as the similarities and dissimilarities between different kinds of animals. They gained first hand experiences of animals, describing the smooth skin of a snake and the fur of a rabbit. Children investigated the effects of air pressure and, under the teacher's guidance; they made cars that were propelled by balloons. They were beginning to investigate for themselves.

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

- In Islamic education, results in recent internal assessments and over time were high. This did not reflect the students' performance in lessons. Attainment against curriculum standards was broadly in line. Most students had adequate knowledge of key Islamic concepts and values. Year 6 students knew about the rituals of 'Haj' but were less able to criticise and differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate practices. Students made adequate progress overall and were developing their skills in recitation of Qur'an and basic Seera facts. However, their understanding of the Holy Qur'an and Hadeeth was underdeveloped. Although prior knowledge of students was measured in lessons, they did not make better progress because teachers did not act on it to provide sufficient challenge. There were no significant differences between boys and girls and different groups of students.
- In lessons, most students attained levels that were in line with the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum for Arabic as a first language. Listening skills were the strongest. Students frequently gave correct answers to teachers' questioning. Understanding was improving over time. They could say sentences correctly using varied vocabulary and could read and understand the curriculum texts. Writing was the weakest skill. Students consistently copied Arabic script, but free writing was limited and students made too many spelling mistakes. Students' workbooks confirmed achievement in line with MoE expectations. Test results showed higher levels of progress and attainment. The level of challenge provided by these tests was too low and were not marked with sufficient accuracy.
- Attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language were in line with expectations. External tests were not available. Listening and speaking skills were stronger than reading and writing. Most students demonstrated good understanding of what was being said. Opportunities to present their learning developed their oral fluency. For example, students in Year 6 engaged in lengthy conversations about climate and the weather. In reading, students could decode the text but often with insufficient understanding of meaning. Students were capable of copy writing accurately however their ability to compose text was limited. Different groups of students performed similarly in terms of their progress. Assessment data for attainment and progress did not reflect students' performance in class.
- In English, the majority of students made good progress and attainment was above age-related expectations. The school's external checks of assessment confirmed this. By Year 6, the majority were independent readers with well-developed comprehension skills. Writing skills were developing well, for example most were able to write properly constructed formal and informal letters. Speaking and listening skills were particularly strong. Students were able to explore a range of topics in thoughtful discussions. However, progress was not consistently good across all years and groups of students. It was slower in the lower primary years before accelerating in Years 5 and 6. The progress of students with SEND was inconsistent because teaching was not routinely well adapted to suit the students' needs.



- Students were enthusiastic, focused on achieving well in mathematics and made very good progress. They had a strong practical and enquiry based approach where critical thinking and problem solving were encouraged. International benchmarking showed above expected level development of mathematical knowledge and understanding. This demonstrated a significant improvement in attainment from the previous year. The weakest mathematical area was in the students' handling of data. When measured against the learning objectives, progress in lessons was very good. Students from Year 1 upwards communicated their mathematical knowledge and understanding with confidence using accurate terminology. Students benefitted from the use of relevant contexts, which made their learning meaningful. Students with SEND made acceptable progress whilst boys and girls made broadly equivalent progress.
- Students' work and externally moderated test results in science indicated that the majority of students attained above curriculum standards, but this was not consistently reflected in lessons. Year 1 students spoke about healthy foods, but were unable to draw clear conclusions. Year 3 students could explore which materials offered better soundproofing qualities. They had an understanding of predicting by means of a hypothesis and used their enquiry skills to establish a fair test. However, their experiences, during lessons often limited their capacity to draw conclusions or to evaluate their findings. By Year 6, students' attainment and progress had accelerated significantly. They had a clear understanding of the stages of scientific enquiry and applied them to experiments, for example with the modeling of various electrical switches. Different groups of students made similar progress including those with SEND.

Secondary		
Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Acceptable	Good ↑
Arabic as a first language	Acceptable ↑	Acceptable
Arabic as an additional language	Weak	Acceptable
English	Good	Good
Mathematics	Very good ↑	Very good ↑
Science	Outstanding ↑	Outstanding ↑

- In Islamic education, the attainment of students in internal assessments and over time were lower than those of students in the primary phase. This did not represent an accurate picture, as the external examinations were too simplistic. Most students had strong knowledge of different Islamic concepts, manners and Seera. However, their recitation and understanding of the Holy Qur'an and Hadeeth were less secure. Year 11 students knew about 'Hajjat Al-Wida'a' (the last visit to Mekkah) and the main messages declared by Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Conversely, they often struggled when reading and understanding short verses from the Holy Qur'an and sometimes had inaccurate translations. They made good progress in their learning because of effective discussions in groups, the development of critical thinking and research. In spite of the low number of students in each class, students studying Islamic education in Arabic were not making progress to the same extent as others because of less effective teaching strategies.

- In Arabic as a first language, most students in lessons, attained levels that were in line with curriculum expectations. Listening skills were strongest and students' understanding improved at an acceptable rate over time. Almost all students used a wide vocabulary with few using informal Arabic. Students could read and understand the texts. Students' writing skills were weaker. Copy writing was still more frequently practised than free writing. The accuracy of grammar was at a level appropriate to curriculum expectations. Assessment data showed higher progress and attainment than that seen in lessons, mainly due to the limited quality of the tests taken.
- In Arabic as an additional language, a minority of students in lessons, attained levels that were in line with curriculum expectations. In the absence of external tests, wider moderation of attainment levels were difficult for the school to assess, but from the majority of the work produced by students, attainment was clearly weak. Listening was the strongest skill and writing was the weakest. Most students were able to give short answers, in sentences, to teachers' questions and in this way they were showing acceptable levels of progress. Rates of progress were similar for different groups of students.
- In English, the majority of students made good progress. At the end of Year 11, attainment in the IGCSE examination was above average. Students' understanding of texts was strong and they were able to extract information to support a point of view. Speaking and listening skills were a particular strength, particularly towards the end of the secondary phase where most students were able to present their viewpoints with clarity and respond thoughtfully to the views of others. The writing of the majority was grammatically correct and conveyed ideas effectively. Though there was room for improvement, the extended writing of most students showed imagination and reflected the good quality of their speaking skills. The progress of students with SEND was acceptable whereas for other groups it was generally good.
- Students were enthusiastic learners in mathematics. Attainment was high. Last year, students achieved outstanding IGCSE results. Students had developed a good understanding of algebra, data analysis, statistics and the use of formulae in calculations whilst the areas of geometry and measurement were weaker. Problem solving, investigation and critical thinking were well integrated into lessons. Use of real life contexts made mathematics relevant. As a result, the large majority of students made better than expected progress in the development of knowledge, skills and understanding across the whole ability range. Students were able to explain their mathematics confidently using accurate and complex terminology. Students with SEND were well integrated and made acceptable progress. Across the phase and for the different groups of students, progress over time was very good.
- Most students attained well above curriculum standards in science. This was reflected in very strong IGCSE examination results, but also in the knowledge, understanding and skills displayed during lessons. Students had highly developed skills in research, critical thinking and modeling of the real world. Years 7 and 8 successfully modeled cell structures and the functions of the digestive system. Year 9 students could analyse information from research, contrasting the impacts of earthquakes in developing and developed countries. Year 10 challenged their own findings from experiments and asked critical questions of each other's research. Year 11 students, comparing electrolytes with electrochemical cells, discovered the excitement of finding they had electroplated their spoon with copper. Students with SEND made acceptable progress in the class. Progress across the phase overall for the different groups of students was outstanding.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Learning skills	Good	Acceptable	Good ↑

- Students demonstrated that they were able to take appropriate responsibility for the own learning. In the FS, children's learning skills had improved. They worked independently on freely chosen activities. In the secondary phase, students' abilities to work independently were clear strengths. In English, mathematics and science, they successfully engaged in structured reflection about their learning using assessment rubrics. However, this was less developed in the primary phase.
- Students collaborated well with their peers when working in pairs or small groups. The quality of discussion and students' abilities to challenge each other's thinking developed as they progressed through the school. This was a particularly strong feature of older students' learning in English and science. In mathematics, students made effective use of accurate, advanced mathematical language in their discussions.
- Students were frequently able to relate their learning to real life situations and make connections to different areas of the curriculum. In primary science, for example, they related their experiments with bouncing balls to sport, and an investigation into soundproofing materials to the construction of an auditorium. In mathematics, young students made pictograms of places they visited. English was widely applied, but Arabic less so.
- Students demonstrated good investigative skills. These were particularly evident in mathematics and science. In the secondary phase, they used technology effectively for independent research. Critical thinking and problem solving were both particularly good features of the learning of older students in mathematics and science. Innovation and enterprise skills were promoted through a variety of activities, including the 'Young Entrepreneurs' club.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Personal development	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Very good ↑

- Students showed positive attitudes in classes, activities, and in assembly. They were keen to take advice about their learning and responded positively to feedback.
- Behaviour around school and during lessons was exemplary. During the times when students were out of the classroom and moving along corridors, students showed commendable self-discipline. No incidents of bullying had been reported. Students showed high levels of cooperation with their peers and adults.
- Students were aware of each other's needs and were very helpful. They worked well together in their classes, supporting their learning. They demonstrated great respect for each other, regardless of cultural background.
- Across the school, students showed a well-developed understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. They actively participated in physical education classes and were highly aware of the differences between healthy and unhealthy foods, demonstrated effectively by the food that they brought to school.
- Students' attendance rate during the previous term was almost 97 per cent for all phases. There were no issues with regard to punctuality at the beginning of the day. Similarly, after recesses, all students attended their classes on time.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good	Very good ↑	Outstanding ↑

- Students demonstrated very good appreciation of the role and the values of Islam in UAE society. They talked about mosques in the UAE and explained that people should be modestly dressed in the malls and public places. The depth of students' understanding increased as they moved through the phases of the school.
- Students, across the school, had great respect for Emirati heritage and culture. They talked about the different activities in Dubai, expected behaviours in public places and celebrations such as Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Fitr and National Day. Students in the secondary phase knew the names of the other Emirates and their rulers and talked about the role of Sheik Zayed in developing the country.
- High respect for cultural diversity was evident. Students celebrated their own culture and demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of world cultures with regard to food, dress and celebrations. Again, as students matured their depth of knowledge grew as they moved through the school. For example, students in the secondary phase were able to talk in detail about different celebrations and festivals.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Good	Good	Very good ↑

- Students participated actively in activities that had positive impact in the school community. Those in secondary phase showed more initiative in improving their school and helping the wider community than those in the other phases. Success was secured through schemes, such as the buddy programme, and the opportunities students had to organise fundraising events.
- Commitment to school activities was high and students were eager to learn. They were able to initiate and participate in events and activities in a number of ways, such as international educational visits, debates, and school camps. They showed deep understanding of what it took to succeed and where to seek help if needed.
- Students were active in improving the environment in their school and in the wider community. They were regularly involved in cleaning and recycling initiatives, in and out of school. They were aware of the importance of preserving a balanced eco-system through conservation and sustainability. Students in the lower phases were less involved in those initiatives than those in the secondary phase.



### 3. Teaching and assessment

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Good ↑

- Teachers' subject knowledge was generally secure. In secondary, teachers generally used their knowledge to plan stimulating and engaging lessons. This was evident in English, mathematics and science. However, teachers' understanding of the most appropriate strategies for teaching Arabic as an additional language was not secure. Similar weaknesses contributed to inconsistencies in the teaching of science and the development of early literacy skills in the lower primary phase.
- Lesson planning followed a common format across all phases. In the FS, effective planning underpinned children's active and enjoyable learning. In many lessons, in secondary, challenging activities promoted rapid gains in learning. However, planning of this quality was not consistently seen in the teaching of Arabic and Islamic education. Most teachers used resources, including information technology, and time well.
- Relationships between adults and students were very positive. Most teachers created a safe and supportive learning environment. In the secondary phase, there was an emphasis on the development of students' knowledge, skills and understanding through carefully crafted questioning. This was less well pronounced in the primary phase. Discussion featured strongly where students were encouraged to share their ideas and to learn from each other.
- Planning to meet the needs of students was not consistent. The school's adopted strategy was to expect more from the most able rather than plan specific activities to meet different needs. Many teachers made good use of paired and small group work. A particular feature of science lessons in the secondary phase was the challenging nature of the extension activities, which enabled students to reach high standards.
- The development of students' creativity and critical thinking skills were features of most lesson plans, but observed most often in the secondary phase. Modern technology was used effectively in most lessons to promote students' research and investigative skills.
- Teachers of Arabic as a first language were all qualified and had secure subject knowledge. They created suitable environments to meet the learning expectations of students. However, teaching was insufficiently matched to the needs of students and opportunities to develop critical thinking were limited.
- Teachers of Arabic as an additional language had good subject knowledge but lacked understanding of how students learned best. In most classes, they did not connect new learning to build on existing skills and understanding. Consequently, this hindered the progress of students across all phases.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Good ↑

- Internal assessment processes were increasingly robust. They were linked to curriculum objectives and usually included rubrics to evaluate students' learning. However, in Arabic as a first language, assessment was too focused on the textbook, with a lack of rigour in the learning objectives. Assessments of Arabic as an additional language were made at the curriculum standard for the year rather than for the different students' proficiencies.



- Since the previous inspection, a range of more valid standardised tests and external assessment, had been used. This enabled the school's attainment and progress to be compared with many other international schools. Benchmarked assessment was informing curriculum design and adaptation but was still not consistently accurate.
- In response to a recommendation from the previous inspection report, tracking of students' progress was better developed and monitored. While the aggregated performance of students was known and used to adapt the curriculum, the assessments often lacked rigour and did not accurately reflect students' performance, for example those used for assessing the Arabic subjects.
- In some subjects, assessment data was successfully used to identify students' weaker areas of knowledge, skills and understanding. In these instances, data analysis informed teaching, learning and curriculum adaptation. This was beginning to support students' progress in English, mathematics and science in the secondary phase. However, it had yet to impact significantly in other subjects, in particular the primary phase, where students' prior knowledge and understanding were not reflected adequately in lesson planning.
- Teachers were aware of their students' strengths and weaknesses. Increasing use of peer and self-assessment by students was developing their understanding of their own abilities and capabilities. This was particularly evident in mathematics and science in the secondary phase. Inconsistent application of evaluations in English and insufficient challenge in Islamic education affected student progress. In Arabic, inflated marking, especially of summative assessments, meant weaknesses were not adequately addressed.

#### 4. Curriculum

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum design and implementation	Very good ↑	Good	Very good ↑




- The curriculum was well matched to the school's stipulated curriculum and its requirements. The school only provided for the second year of FS. The Cambridge International Primary Curriculum had recently been introduced to better prepare students for the existing Cambridge Secondary Curriculum. However, inconsistencies in the implementation in the primary phase affected students' learning and progress. The curriculum for Arabic was fully compliant with statutory requirements.
- The curriculum was carefully planned to ensure continuity and progression in students' learning. It met the needs of the majority of students and mostly prepared them well for the next stage of their education. Older students were particularly well prepared to continue their studies beyond the school. Transition arrangements from FS to Year 1 had improved to create better continuity in students' learning.
- More curricular options were available to older students and included travel and tourism, and environmental management. Further enhancements included computer programming, robotics, art and design and Urdu. In FS, very good use was made of the improved outdoor area for children's learning. Opportunities to promote the development of children's language and social skills through play, expressive arts and science were increased.
- The curriculum effectively linked learning across most subjects, demonstrated effectively by the many quality displays of students' work in the corridors and classrooms. There was a strong emphasis on the acquisition and development of investigation and critical thinking skills in the secondary phase, but less so in primary.

- Teachers and senior leaders continuously reviewed the curriculum. Through weekly planning meetings, teachers reviewed the impact of the curriculum and made modifications where necessary. An ongoing part of the review process was progress towards UAE National Agenda targets and the introduction of UAE social studies.
- UAE social studies followed the MoE curriculum with some modifications to include National Agenda. It was broad and balanced with extra-curricular projects linked to entrepreneurship and innovation. It offered clear progression through the phases. Effective cross-curricular links had been made to science, mathematics, English, Arabic and Islamic education.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum adaptation	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable

- There was variable planning to meet the differing needs of students across the school, but was particularly effective in FS. In many lessons in the secondary phase, teachers adjusted their lesson plans to provide suitable work for students of differing abilities, particularly in science and mathematics. However, in Arabic and in the lower primary phase, activities were not consistently matched to students' needs, thereby limiting the progress of students.
- The curriculum pathways available for older students were suited to their abilities, interests and aspirations. These included science and business pathways with flexibility to build an individual programme with subjects from both curriculum blocks. Students were provided with appropriate guidance towards their career ambitions.
- A suitable range of extra-curricular and community links allowed students to extend their learning outside the classroom. These included enterprising, outreach activities and fundraising for worthy causes. The development of students' understanding of the culture and traditions of the UAE was embedded in the curriculum and enhanced by visits to places of historic and cultural significance.
- Arabic for first and additional language learners was taught in FS with the intention of providing students with a solid foundation and interest in the subject in future years.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Very good 	Very good 	Very good 

- Health and safety was a high priority and there were rigorous procedures in place to protect students from harm. The school very effectively promoted the responsibility of parents, teachers and students in avoiding possible dangers when using the internet and social media. The school had revised the arrangements for child protection, which included regular training for teachers. Students and teachers were aware of the role of the designated child protection officer.

- Students were well supervised in classrooms, on transport, during break times and in lessons. Students' health was closely monitored by the nurse and visiting doctor. Several other staff members held first aid qualifications. Risk assessments were completed for educational visits. Regular fire drills were organised and monitored by the school Emergency Response Team. The Civil Defence completed necessary checks on fire equipment.
- The school was clean and well maintained and provided a safe learning environment. In the outdoor areas, soft surfaces surrounded the large climbing equipment allowing FS children to use this safely. The nurse maintained detailed records of accidents and these were rare. Medical staff shared information with teachers about some medical conditions, such as diabetes and allergies.
- The school environment mostly supported students' learning well. The number of children in each FS class had reduced, so classrooms were less cramped. Teachers made very good use of space in the corridors, which included a recently developed 'free flow' classroom and the spacious outdoor learning areas. Special ramps provided ease of access to the lower floor areas of the school.
- The school promoted healthy living very well. Fresh drinking water was available and accessible. Across the school, the well-planned health education programme ensured students were well informed about healthy lifestyles. In science lessons they learned the importance of hygiene, about the link between health and diet, and the negative impact of smoking. All students regularly took part in exercise through the range of sport activities available.

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Care and support	Good	Acceptable	Good ↑

- School staff had positive relationships with students and an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect ensued. Teachers were well aware of the needs of students in their care. Students reported that they enjoyed school, were well cared for and could approach their teachers if they had any concerns.
- Teachers provided good levels of supervision during break times and when students arrived and departed from school. There was a consistent approach to behaviour management and teachers managed students' behaviour supportively. The school had efficient tracking procedures in place to monitor attendance. Parents were contacted immediately when students failed to arrive to school as expected.
- The school's systems for identifying students with SEND were appropriate and accurate. Parents were fully involved in the process of identification, planning of their child's individual education programme and in their support. A comprehensive system for identifying students with gifts and talents had been introduced but its implementation was, as yet, more evident in the outcomes for secondary students.
- A few students with SEND benefitted from individualised support in small withdrawal groups. However, the support for students with SEND in class was variable. Teachers did not always provide the personalised support which these students needed in order to make the necessary gains in their learning. Gifted and talented students were given opportunities to excel through a range of extra-curricular activities and projects, particularly in the secondary phase.
- The school promoted students' welfare and personal development well, showing a genuine interest in students' well-being. Medical staff provided good medical care. Students had access to staff who dealt with their concerns sympathetically. Students in the secondary phase received good advice about their academic performance and, through their targets, were clear about what they needed to do to improve.

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

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

Acceptable

- The school's admission procedures were inclusive and the school was committed to ensuring that students with SEND took a full part in school life. The newly appointed leadership was well qualified and had a clear vision for the development of the SEND provision.
- The school implemented targeted improvement plans, which had begun to have some impact on students' progress. However, further support was required for teachers and their assistants to ensure that the provision and outcomes for all students with SEND reached expected levels.
- The specialist SEND team provided targeted support for primary phase students in withdrawal groups. This enabled them to make acceptable progress in early literacy skills from their starting points. Teachers were resourceful with the limited means available for students with SEND.
- The specialist team provided relevant guidance and advice for teachers. However, the quality of planning, curriculum modification and support in classrooms was too variable. Support was often focused on completion of the task rather than deepening the students' understanding through questioning and discussion.
- Students made acceptable progress in most subjects. In lessons, where tasks and support were tailored to students' needs, students made good progress. Systems for the tracking and monitoring of students' progress had improved. However, progress was being measured against curriculum year group expectations rather than the targets in individual education plans. Assessment was not routinely used to inform the next steps of learning, interventions and support during lessons.

## 6. Leadership and management

### The effectiveness of leadership

Good

- Teachers, senior leaders, some parents and students created the school vision. It was well promoted and understood within the school community and made links to the UAE vision for 2021. The vision and the mission were central to decision-making. The school had started to network with other international schools with the aim of establishing working partnerships on shared initiatives.
- Two members of the leadership team were new and brought fresh perspectives. Most leaders had good knowledge of best educational practice. They kept themselves updated on developments and had started to make changes to the culture of the school in order to respond to the needs of 21st century learners. Current initiatives included an emphasis on critical thinking, the use of mobile devices and innovation.
- Delegated responsibilities were effective throughout the school. Lines of accountability were clear and key tasks were being reviewed and made more explicit in job descriptions. Communication was smooth and supported informed decision making. Meeting notes showed that discussions were focused on the school's key purpose but these were not supported by rigorous evaluation of the quality of provision and the academic progress of students.



- Senior leaders expressed the school's current priorities and the plans to address them. Their knowledge of the processes for monitoring progress towards common objectives was good. They had shown great creativity, within the limited resources, in finding solutions to existing problems. For example, a valuable outdoor learning area for children in FS had been created in one of the school's external spaces.
- School leaders had been successful in improving priorities that been identified in the previous inspection. Most notable were the improvements made to the provision for students in the secondary phase and in mathematics. At the same time, it had sustained the good performance of many areas in the rest of the school and ensured compliance with all regulatory requirements.

#### School self-evaluation and improvement planning

Acceptable

- The process of school self-evaluation was continuous. Strengths and weaknesses were evaluated in light of internal assessments, external standardised testing and the monitoring of teaching. This process culminated in the writing of the school evaluation form (SEF) which provided the blueprint for improvement. Plans focused on a restricted number of key priorities and these were integrated and developed in the detailed subject and phase strategies.
- The school had addressed issues from the previous inspection report. A comprehensive system had been created to gather students' performance data at an individual level and to aggregate it to show the progress of different groups of students. With external support, a system of assessing teacher performance had also been developed. However, the data that was being gathered to measure improvement was not sufficiently accurate.
- The detailed improvement plans gave clear guidance about targets within the strategies that would lead to improvement, timescales, responsibilities and quantifiable measures for determining success or otherwise. International benchmark test results were used to confirm students' performance and school progress towards UAE National Agenda targets.
- Action had resulted in progress in some areas, for example in students' performance in mathematics in the primary and secondary phases. This improvement was directly linked to the enhancement in the quality of teaching, the development of students' learning skills, the assessment of students' performance, modification of the curriculum and a reduction in class sizes.

#### Partnerships with parents and the community

Good

- Parents were engaged through a range of strategies. Coffee mornings brought parents together to share information about procedures and child development. Volunteers supported learning in the classrooms, social events and ran extra-curricular activities, such as the Urdu club. On occasion, parents contributed to decisions about policies, for example a small group of parents were involved in a trial to collect and share students' performance information.
- Most parents were very positive about the openness of communication channels. They felt that teachers and school leaders were readily accessible. The school used a variety of means of informing parents about school practices and events. These included emails, SMS, the school website and blogs, often created by students. Parents of students with SEND spoke highly of the information that they received from the school.



- Parents regularly received reports about their child's performance. Teachers commented on academic performance and the development of learning skills. The primary and middle school phase reports did not contain an evaluation of students' personal development and targets for the future. Following receipt of the reports, parents were invited into school to discuss their child's performance in greater detail. These meetings were well attended.
- The school had taken the opportunity to make extensive links within the local community to the benefit of the students. Opportunities to engage in sporting and cultural events and in environmental projects were taken. Students were involved in charitable activities with the 'Red Crescent' and 'Dubai Cares'. Partnerships had been made between teachers in local schools to discuss developments in digital learning and effective strategies for including students with SEND in classrooms.

## Governance

Good

- Governance rested with 'The City Schools' group' in Pakistan. A governors' representative operated in the school daily. The governing body sought feedback from parents through an annual survey and open access to the governors' representative. The parents felt that the school and the governing body reacted quickly and positively to issues, but insufficient opportunity for them to contribute to informing the decision-making processes.
- Formal systems existed for the governing body to receive school information. The principal provided a regular, written report. Informal opportunities also existed through daily discussions between the school community and the governors' representative. Although the school reports were comprehensive and detailed, the level of evaluation was limited. This created some difficulties for the governors in monitoring progress toward academic targets that had been set for leadership.
- Although the 'City Schools' group could not provide economies of scale to benefit the school, it did bring a considerable training resource to the staff. Many teachers were benefiting from year-long professional development from a university partnership. Extra investment in the form of employing an external agency to support improvement planning and developing the capacity of teachers of Arabic was also provided.




## Management, staffing, facilities and resources

Acceptable

- Most aspects of the day-to-day management of the school were well organised. The school's procedures and routines were effective in running the school operations smoothly. Timetabling was effective.
- The school was staffed appropriately. Almost all staff had academic qualifications. However, a minority did not have a teaching qualification; two thirds were in the primary phase. New staff had a separate induction programme. All members of the teaching staff were trained extensively and training was evaluated. However, the impact of training on teachers' performance in lessons was inconsistent.
- The premises were adequate overall. Specialist facilities were available including a library and laboratories for science and information technology. Wireless access to the Internet was used by students in lessons for research. An external learning area for children in FS was good. Both the sports hall and music room were small in size, which restricted effective development of skills. The school had added a dedicated prayer room.
- Resources were sufficient to support teaching and learning particularly in physical education, information technology and science. The school did not have enough books in the library or technology, to support teaching in classrooms, in spite of the 'Bring Your Own Device' programme. The music room had insufficient musical instruments.

## 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	
<b>Parents*</b> 	2015-2016	293
	2014-2015	123
<b>Teachers</b> 	64	
<b>Students</b> 	90	

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

- Those members of the school community who responded to the surveys did so very positively.
- Nearly all parents and most students believe that students make good progress in English, mathematics, Islamic education and science. A minority of students feel that their progress in Arabic as a first language was not so rapid.
- Parents and students appreciated the quality of the teachers, the value of the assessments, the range of resources and the good range of subjects. Most students felt well prepared to leave school.
- School safety was greatly appreciated by all members of the school community.
- Most parents and students valued the opportunities the school provided to learn more about Islam, Emirati heritage, other cultures, and the environment and to become involved in the community.
- There was a very strong feeling that the school was well led. Teachers appreciated the opportunities to be involved in receiving the DSIB report and evaluating the school.

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