

INSPECTION REPORT

Salman Al Farsi Iranian School

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Salman Al Farsi Iranian School

Location	Al Qusais
Type of school	Private
Website	www.salmanfarsi.ae
Telephone	04-2988173
Address	PO Box 3167, Dubai
Principal	Abdollah Shah Mohammad Bayat
Curriculum	Iranian
Gender of students	Boys
Age / Grades or Year Groups	5-21 / Grade 1 to Grade 13
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	576
Number of Emirati students	0
Date of the inspection	Monday 21st to Wednesday 23rd November 2011

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The context of the school

Salman Al Farsi School is situated in Al Qusais. There were 576 students on roll, including students with moderate and severe disabilities who attended the on-site unit for students with special educational needs. The school catered for boys between the ages of five and 18 in the main school, and both boys and girls, between the ages of seven and 21, in its special unit. The school offered an Iranian curriculum and students were entered for national examinations set by the Iranian government examination board.

The school had 50 full-time teachers including the Principal and his senior management team. All teachers had appropriate teaching qualifications. The five full-time teachers working in the special unit had specialist qualifications in addition to teaching qualifications and there were a number of part-time medical professionals who supported this team. Students were grouped in nine primary classes and in ten classes, two in each grade, in the middle phase. In the high school phase, students were divided into three strands: humanities, mathematics and science. The school had not formally identified any students with special educational needs in the main school. At the time of the inspection, the Principal had been in post for three years.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Salman Al Farsi School provided an acceptable quality of education. Students showed very positive attitudes and a strong commitment to learning. Relationships between students and staff were mutually respectful and this had a positive impact on students' learning. Students' attainment and progress in mathematics and science was good in the middle and high phases. Teaching for effective learning, the quality of students' learning and assessment were acceptable at all levels and consistency in these was an area of priority for the school. The school did not deliver an appropriate Ministry of Education curriculum for Islamic Education and was not delivering the correct hours of Arabic teaching for speakers of Arabic as an additional language for primary-aged students. Support and care of the students were a high priority for the school. One notable feature of the school was its unit for special educational needs, which effectively catered for thirty students with complex learning needs. Students had a good understanding of Islam and an appreciation of local traditions and cultures. Many of the students committed to memorising chapters of

The Holy Qur'an and this was actively encouraged by parents and the local community and rewarded by the school. The school had built good relationships with all its parents. In addition to providing high quality information about students' progress in school, financial assistance was provided for almost 20 per cent of the school population who could not afford the school fees. The Principal provided a strong vision for improvement but the role of his senior staff in school improvement initiatives was underdeveloped. This was the school's first inspection by Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau.

Key strengths

- Students' very positive attitudes, strong commitment to learning and relationships with staff;
- Students' attainment and progress in mathematics and science in the middle and high school;
- Students' understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and cultures;
- The broad programme of academic, emotional and social development, as well as life skills' training offered to students in the special unit;
- The clear vision and the developing focus on school improvement promoted by the Principal.

Recommendations

- Improve students' progress in Arabic in the middle phase of the school;
- Plan lessons that include active learning, independent work, problem solving and critical thinking;
- Ensure that the curriculum for Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language meet UAE Ministry of Education requirements;
- Make effective use of assessment data to track students' progress from year to year, and to set challenging targets for improved attainment across key subjects;
- Include senior teachers and curriculum co-ordinators in school improvement.

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

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

Attainment in Islamic Education was not evaluated because the school did not fully follow the UAE Ministry of Education curriculum for this subject. By the end of the primary phase, students' attainment in all key subjects was acceptable. Most students made expected progress in their speaking and listening skills in Arabic and English and were able to hold simple conversations. In mathematics, students developed a secure understanding of number. In the middle and higher phases, students' attainment in Arabic and

English was acceptable and their attainment in mathematics and science was good. By the end of the secondary phase, in Arabic and English, students were reading more complex texts but their writing was limited to textbook tasks. By the end of Grade 12, students were using their mathematical knowledge to support their scientific investigations and could confidently give evidence for scientific theories.

Students made acceptable progress in Arabic, English and science in the primary phase and made good progress in mathematics. Students made unsatisfactory progress in Grades 1 and 2 but accelerated progress in Grades 4 and 5 in mathematics and science. In the middle phase, students' progress in Arabic was unsatisfactory due to the lack of opportunities for students to use the language in lessons. Progress in English for the middle and high school phases was acceptable although there were limited opportunities for the students to develop their writing skills. In mathematics and science, most students made good progress throughout the middle and high school. Students with special educational needs made acceptable progress in all phases.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Primary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Attitudes and behaviour were good throughout the school. Students had purposeful and positive relationships with their teachers and their peers. Primary students respected routines and behaved well when supervised. They were not always self-reliant when adults were not present. Students showed great respect and enthusiasm for learning; they saw it as their personal responsibility to work hard in order to be successful. Older students had ambitious career goals. Although students understood what to do to live a healthy life, they did not always put their knowledge into practice. Attendance was good. Students' understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture were good across all phases. Almost

all students showed a good understanding of Islam and their duties as Muslims. They had a clear awareness of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai and their own roles within that society. Civic, economic and environmental understanding was acceptable. Students in the primary phase held responsibilities to lead their peers. Older students had the opportunity to be student councillors at school and national levels. Many older students understood Dubai's history as a trading nation and could explain changes in the society and economy over time. Most had a good understanding of environmental issues and the complexity of decisions that have to be made about sustainability. However, only a few students were actively involved in projects or schemes to support conservation or sustainability.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Primary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable. Most teachers had good knowledge of their subjects and how to teach them. A few teachers of Arabic lacked a secure understanding of their subject area. In primary, teachers' understanding of how younger students learn was underdeveloped. Most teachers gave clear explanations and demonstrations. They used questions well to involve students in discussion and to check understanding. In science and mathematics, teachers asked questions which challenged students to solve problems. In the majority of lessons, there were too few opportunities for group and individual work. This did not allow enough time for students to practise skills and develop their understanding fully. Most lessons were planned to give students a range of activities. These varied in quality. Some activities inspired and engaged students. Others did not provide enough opportunities for students to be actively involved in learning, particularly in the primary. Most teachers helped students who experienced difficulties in their learning. However, in most lessons, there were no special resources for these students or extension work to challenge high achieving students. Most teachers in the special unit gave appropriate support for students. Most lessons progressed at a productive pace. Teachers had positive and supportive relationships with students and encouraged them to do their best.

Learning was acceptable. Students enjoyed their lessons. They were enthusiastic, attentive learners and worked hard. They willingly contributed to lessons, answering questions and volunteering to demonstrate their learning. When given the opportunity, students were able to work independently and collaboratively with their peers. As students progressed through the school, they took more responsibility for their learning. In high school, most students had high expectations and aspirations for themselves and showed maturity in setting their own personal goals. Students showed their potential to be reflective, analytical and critical when questioned but opportunities were limited for them to develop these skills and other study skills during lessons.

Assessment was acceptable. Most teachers assessed students' progress during lessons and helped students improve their work through oral feedback. Marking did not provide clear advice on how to improve. Teachers did not involve students in setting their own learning goals. Although much information was gathered on students' attainment and progress, teachers did not use it well enough to plan learning activities which would enable students to make further progress. Teachers provided additional lessons for identified students to help prepare them for examinations.

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

	Primary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum was based on the Iranian National Curriculum and as such had a clear rationale and planned progression. The curriculum was reviewed when the National Curriculum changed and new text books were issued. An over-reliance on textbooks meant that the curriculum did not fully meet the specific needs of all students. There was some choice in learning for older students. The curriculum did not meet the requirements of the UAE Ministry of Education for Islamic Education and for the teaching of Arabic in the primary phase. In science and mathematics, applications of the curriculum to real life were emphasised. The practically-based curriculum for information and communication technology equipped students effectively with a wide range of relevant skills. Across the curriculum, there were limited opportunities for students to become independent learners. There was a lack of scope for extended investigative work and problem solving. The close proximity of middle and high school classrooms and shared teachers provided for effective transition between the two phases. There was a strong emphasis on sport, particularly football, at which school teams were very successful, but this was not matched by opportunities for those interested in creative subjects. Only limited use was made of field visits and the local community and these were usually linked to supporting students in decisions about choices in relation to careers rather than to support and enrich curriculum delivery.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Primary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were acceptable. All staff took their duty of care seriously. Evacuation drills were carried out regularly with good record-keeping. There were clear expectations and practised routines throughout the day and on the school buses which ensured students' safety. The premises, although showing signs of wear, were mostly clean and little litter was seen. Equipment was maintained in good condition, with appropriate records maintained. However, in some areas of the building, minor repair work had not been completed. Healthy living was systematically built into the curriculum but was promoted more effectively in the primary phase than in the middle or secondary phases. The canteen sold healthy food but also several less healthy options. All staff had been trained and were aware of child protection arrangements.

The quality of support throughout the school was acceptable. Relationships between teachers and students were positive. Teachers knew their students well and students felt comfortable to seek advice for any worries or concerns. Although students' test results were analysed, insufficient attention was given to identifying students in all classes who could benefit from additional learning support or more challenging work. In the special unit, most students received effective support. The school had effective systems to manage attendance and punctuality. Good work and behaviour were acknowledged through celebration and rewards. However systems to manage younger boys' behaviour did not sufficiently promote the development of self-discipline during time out of class.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The leadership of the school was acceptable. The Principal had good leadership skills and communicated a strong vision, which was widely shared by students, staff and parents. This was particularly necessary due to the regular staff turnover, which needed to be carefully managed to ensure consistency and progression in learning. The Principal was well supported in day-to-day management by his assistants and curriculum co-ordinators, but their experience and expertise was not always drawn upon to support school improvement activities.

The school's self-evaluation and improvement planning procedures were acceptable. Senior staff, including some subject co-ordinators, had identified the school's areas for development. The school improvement plan was based on these and identified personnel, activities and success criteria to meet the objectives. It was not sufficiently focused on how the activities would be monitored and evaluated to ensure that they had the required impact on student learning. Staff performance was regularly monitored and resulted in targeted professional development. Training was centrally designed and whilst the courses targeted curriculum knowledge, the required pedagogical development required in this particular school was not sufficiently highlighted.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. The school communicated effectively with parents as partners in their children's learning. Parents received high quality, regular information about the progress made by their child. They were given opportunities to take part in wider school events such as the weekly physics challenge. Relationships between the parents of the students in the special unit and the school were well established and based on mutual trust and support. As a result, these students felt safe and secure in school. Links with the wider community were less well developed and consisted of drugs and health awareness workshops conducted by the local medical centre and visits from and to local universities.

Governance was acceptable. The school was held accountable by the Iranian Education Board, which made regular visits to the school to evaluate the curriculum, assessment analyses and teacher performance. The team had a good understanding of the school's priorities for development but did not ensure that UAE Ministry of Education statutory requirements were met. The team had developed good formal consultation and communication links with parents and with students, which enabled both sets of stakeholders to have their views heard.

The school's management, staffing facilities and resources were acceptable. The school's procedures and routines were well established and understood. Staff were suitably qualified but not always deployed according to their skills. This was difficult to achieve due to the high turnover of staff. Specialist facilities such as the science laboratory were not always well used. Learning resources were limited and not always well used when they were available.

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	12	3%
	Last year	The school was not inspected in 2010-2011	
Teachers	5		10%
Students	8		8%

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

Only a small portion of parents responded to the survey. Ten percent of the teachers and a similar proportion of students responded to their surveys. Most parents and students indicated broad satisfaction with the quality of education available at the school. Parents were generally very happy with the progress their children made in Islamic Education, mathematics and science. In contrast, they had some concerns about their children's progress in Arabic and English as well as the limited choice of extra-curricular activities. A number of students thought that the range of subjects was limited; a few also indicated that they were not involved in improving their school. Conversely, parents and teachers indicated that they were involved in school improvement. Parents, teachers and students were broadly positive in their views of the school's provision across a range of aspects.

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.

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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