

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai Arab American Private School

Report published in April 2103

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai Arab American Private School

Location	Al Muhaisnah
Type of school	Private
Website	www.daaschool.com
Telephone	04-288-2222
Address	P.O. Box 232212, Dubai,
Principal	Wasfieh Sh. M. Al Yousef
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten 1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	960
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	693 (72%)
Date of the inspection	11 th to 13 th March 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 good is the students' personal and social development?	10
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	10
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	11
How well does the school protect and support students?	12
How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?.....	12
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 Arab American Private School, which opened in 2006, is located in Al Muhaisnah. At the time of the inspection the school had a student population of 960 from Kindergarten to Grade 12, an increase of 304 students from last year. A majority of the school's students were Emirati and the rest were expatriate students for whom the school provided Arabic as an additional language. Almost all students were learners of English as an additional language. Classes were of mixed gender in the Kindergarten and up to Grade 3. Starting from Grade 4, boys and girls were segregated. In Grades 11 and 12, students were taught in either a business or scientific stream. The school had recently identified 60 students with special educational needs (SEN).

The school provided a US curriculum based on the Common Core State Standards in English and mathematics. It followed the California state standards in science and the UAE Ministry of Education standards in Islamic Education, Arabic and social studies. Most assessment information came from internal testing and observation. Grade 12 students took national and external tests such as the CEPA, SAT and the Test Of English as a Foreign Language to support higher education placement.

There were 76 teachers and turnover had been high during the last two years. Most teachers were Arab expatriates and had a university degree in the subjects they taught. Only a few English teachers were native speakers of English. Few teachers had teaching qualifications, including those in the Kindergarten, who were supported by unqualified classroom assistants. The Principal, who had been in the post for less than three years, had recently re-appointed the Head of the Kindergarten as Vice Principal.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Improved provision and outcomes in the Kindergarten, particularly in English;
- Improved attainment and progress in English, science and Arabic as an additional language;
- The positive attitudes and behaviour of almost all students, particularly the Kindergarten children.

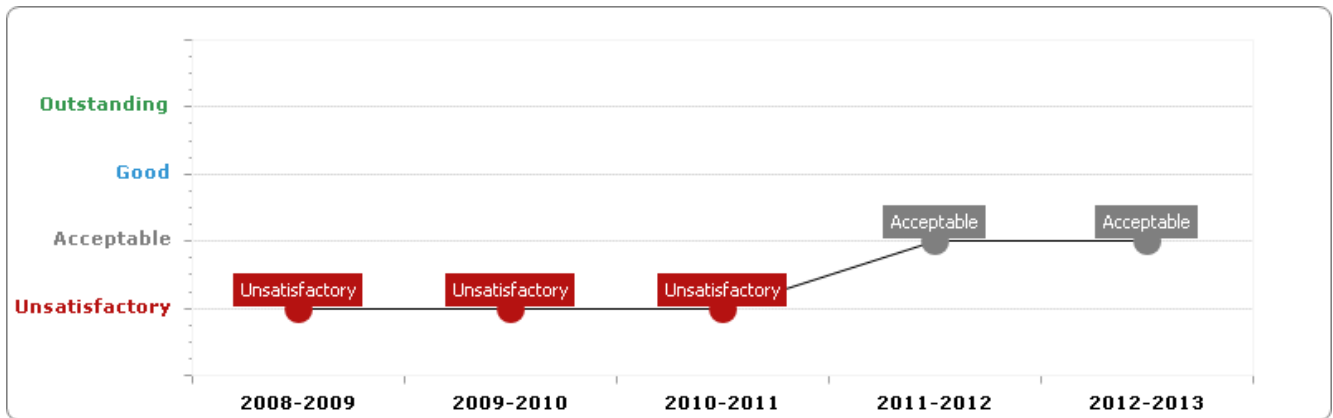
Recommendations

- Improve learning through better-planned teaching and further promote independent learning and critical thinking;
- Develop assessment systems that enable the school to collect and analyse accurate internal and external data in order to improve teaching, learning and the curriculum;
- Establish arrangements for child protection and implement them effectively, including the training of all staff;
- Ensure that students and staff are safe at all times and address weaknesses on health and safety as identified in this report;
- Develop a comprehensive system for the identification and support for students with special educational needs;
- Ensure that the governing body provides the school with sufficient leadership capacity and resources to improve its work.

Progress since the last inspection

- There was improvement in students' attainment and progress from unsatisfactory to acceptable in Arabic as an additional language in the elementary phase;
- There was better attainment by students in English across the elementary, middle and high schools and good progress in English in both the Kindergarten and elementary phases;
- There was acceptable attainment and progress by students in science in the middle school;
- There were good attitudes and behaviour of Kindergarten children and improved behaviour by boys throughout the school;
- There was good quality of teaching, learning and curriculum in the Kindergarten.

Trend of overall performance



جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment was acceptable in almost all subjects and phases, except in Arabic as an additional language in the middle school where it was unsatisfactory. Most students showed adequate Qu'ran recitation skills and application of the Tajweed rules. They knew the basic types of worship and rules and were aware of major Islamic values. Most students showed an acceptable knowledge of the Prophets' stories. In Arabic as a first language and additional language, most students showed better listening and speaking skills as they were able to express basic ideas using a reasonable range of familiar words. However, their writing was less well-developed particularly among those learning Arabic as an additional language in the middle school. In English, students' listening skills were the strongest feature in all phases. They developed their speaking skills well, but their pronunciation and fluency were not consistently good. The majority read for information and pleasure, although not always with understanding. Students' writing skills were less well-developed, particularly their spelling, punctuation and grammar. In mathematics, Kindergarten children could count with reasonable accuracy and recognise simple shapes and patterns. A minority of elementary students' computation skills were underdeveloped. Middle school students could apply their mathematical knowledge but required close direction to ensure accuracy. High school students were more independent and skillful at using and applying their mathematical skills. In science, students could recall scientific content accurately but demonstrated weaker skills in interpreting data from experiments, and in observation, recording, and analysis of results.

Progress was acceptable in most subjects and phases, although it was better in English in the Kindergarten and elementary school. In Islamic Education, most students showed developing use of the Tajweed rules. A minority of students made better progress in the recitation and understanding of new verses. In Arabic as a first language and additional language, students' oral skills were getting better more quickly than their creative and extended writing skills, which developing too slowly. In English, the middle and high school students' progress in writing at length for a range of purposes was too slow. They were not engaging in language tasks at appropriate degrees of difficulty. In mathematics, Kindergarten children built on their learning by producing more complex patterns. Progress in mathematics was sound across the school when measured against the internal standards. However, progress was stronger in the upper years of the high school. In science, progress was better in acquiring knowledge and understanding of concepts than in acquiring practical scientific skills.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

The children's attitudes and behaviour were good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in the other phases. Students were generally courteous, but a few boys were disruptive in hallways and in classes. Kindergarten children demonstrated age-appropriate independence. Relationships among students and with teachers were strong. Although most students understood healthy lifestyles, they did not always apply their understanding to their own lives. Attendance was good, but a few students arrived late to school each day. Students in the elementary phase showed good understanding of Islamic values and their impact on life in Dubai; however, that understanding was weaker in other phases. Most elementary students appreciated the UAE's culture and could recognise important features of other cultures. In the middle and high schools, students were aware of Emirati traditions, but their appreciation of other cultures was not well-developed. In the Kindergarten, students showed responsibility for the materials in class and understood the importance of taking care of pets and plants. Students in other phases participated in recycling and planting activities at school and took part in the Environment Day. Students valued the importance of work and participated in the Business Day held by the school. However, the range of student-led activities was insufficient.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

The quality of teaching was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in the elementary, middle and high school phases. Most teachers had sound knowledge of their subject and planned lessons carefully, but not all aspects of their plans were delivered consistently. Teaching objectives were not always shared effectively with students and too many lessons ended without students' understanding being checked and learning consolidated. Information and communication technology (ICT) was used occasionally to support teaching. Too often, teachers did much of the talking and relied heavily on text books and worksheets which did not always match students' needs. This limited students' opportunities to be interactive and become more independent learners. Most teachers provided clear instructions, but their use of questions to challenge and extend students' understanding required improvement. Teaching strategies did not consistently meet the learning needs of all groups of students. Teaching observed in other subjects, including ICT, business studies, physical education, art and social studies was broadly acceptable.

The quality of learning was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in the other three phases. Students were enthusiastic and motivated to learn when engaged in discussing their work with others. However,

their collaborative working skills were not consistently strong. Students were heavily dependent upon teachers' directions and lacked independent learning skills. Their use of ICT to support learning was poor.

Students' behaviour, particularly that of boys, had improved and interactions were respectful, resulting in improved concentration on tasks. The application of learning to the real world was inconsistent and connections between areas of learning was lacking. Independent research and personal project work took place outside of class time and was done mostly by older students. Students' inquiry and critical thinking skills were not developing well enough.

The quality of assessment was acceptable throughout the school. Assessment data was collected internally but did not allow comparison of students' attainment with other schools internationally. Data was not investigated rigorously to identify trends in students' learning that required action. Some use had been made of diagnostic tests to identify the students who needed support and those requiring greater challenge. Most teachers knew individual students' strengths and weaknesses. However, they did not make effective use of information from their assessments to modify their teaching and the tasks they set for students. Students' self and peer-evaluation were infrequent. There was no school-wide system for the marking of students' written work. The students were not provided with sufficient feedback to improve their work. Most students did not know their next steps in learning in various subjects.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in the other phases. The curriculum had a clear rationale based on the school's values. It provided a choice of two streams of study for students in Grades 11 and 12 but no other options. Art was offered up to Grade 5 for boys and up to Grade 9 for girls. Two additional periods of Islamic Education were scheduled for students in Grades 1 to 9, and physical education and ICT classes were provided for all students. The curriculum was reviewed annually. Curriculum standards were adopted in key subjects, ensuring progression of skills across all phases. However, some English standards were too challenging for second language learners and some mathematics standards were lower than the grade level expectations. The revised, integrated Kindergarten curriculum addressed the needs of almost all children. Although curriculum documents reflected different kinds of instruction and the teaching of critical thinking, these were not a feature in most lessons beyond the Kindergarten. An appropriate range of enrichment activities, including extra-curricular activities and few community links, helped students develop academically and socially.

[View judgments](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for students' health and safety were unsatisfactory. The management of traffic at the beginning of the day was inadequate. The lack of organisation and the inconsiderate actions of drivers placed students at risk. Premises were maintained but there were areas around the school that were potentially hazardous to students and the staff. Students had the benefit of a well-organised clinic where their health records were efficiently maintained. The clinic staff aided the school in promoting healthy living, but the healthy food choices available in the canteens were limited. The school had no child protection policy and there had been no child protection training for the staff.

The quality of support for students was acceptable. Students were very appreciative of their teachers and valued their relationships with them. Teachers knew their students and managed them effectively. The good attendance was testament to the procedures for managing attendance and punctuality. Supervisors placed calls to parents on the first days of absences and the Principal intervened when punctuality was a concern. Staff members were conscious of the students' well-being and the counselor ensured that there was advice and support available to students when required. Students benefitted from the help and guidance they received when considering careers or the next phases of their education.

[View judgements](#)

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

There were important weaknesses in the school's arrangements for the identification of students with special educational needs. The school chose not to admit any students that it perceived to have special needs. There was no special needs co-ordinator and no system for identifying students or producing appropriate support programmes for them. A small number of students had recently been identified by the school as having special educational needs, but only a few had individual education plans. Whilst there was no co-ordinated approach to monitoring the progress of students with additional needs, those observed were, through the efforts of individual teachers, making acceptable progress.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. The Principal and her leadership team demonstrated good commitment to improvement and shared a common vision for developing the school. However, the direction set for improvement was not shared by all leaders. Consequently, various initiatives were implemented but with minimal effect, as they lacked cohesion. The school did not have sufficient senior leaders to develop the curriculum, monitor its delivery, or establish rigorous assessment systems. Although the roles and responsibilities of leaders were defined, they often overlapped. This meant that certain staff members were not held fully accountable for their work. The identification of priorities was incomplete.

The school's self-evaluation was acceptable. It was based on the DSIB Inspection Handbook's quality indicators but evaluations lacked rigour and accuracy. Self-evaluation was mostly narrative but some of the evidence provided to support judgements was inaccurate. There were some appropriate practices in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning through frequent lesson observation. However, these had limited effects upon improvement. The leadership team had developed a comprehensive improvement plan that covered most aspects and domains of the school, but it was not well-implemented and reviewed and led only to partial improvement.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Most parents held positive views of the school and believed that their children were receiving good quality education. The school had established better communication systems with parents, who appreciated the leader's open door policy. They described teachers and school leaders as being approachable. The parent council was appointed and not elected. It rarely communicated with other parents, and was not considered to be representative of all parents. The school involved parents in their children's education by reporting to them about their children's performance or through formal and informal meetings. The school had made some temporary connections and executed a number of projects and initiatives for specific purposes.

The governance of the school was acceptable. The governing board had very limited representation. None of its members had any education experience and consequently could not provide expert advice. The board supported the school financially, but its control limited the school leaders' autonomy over aspects of the school including performance management and the curriculum. The board was committed to developing the school and provided some appropriate resources for that purpose. The board members had very limited connections with parents. Whilst the board was aware of some of the school's priorities it did not fully appreciate the challenges facing the Principal and other school leaders. The board held the school Principal to account and a few of its members met with her frequently to discuss school-related issues.

The day-to-day management of the school was acceptable. The timetable was appropriately structured. Most staff members were university graduates; however, few of them held teaching qualifications. There was an evident lack of staff to take senior management or special responsibilities, thus leaving a burden on very few leaders. The school premises and facilities were appropriately maintained, but there was a lack of specialist resources, particularly for students with SEN, which restricted their admission and support for them. The science laboratories were well equipped. Data projectors were available throughout the school but not often used effectively. The library lacked sufficient appropriate resources for the number of students in attendance.

[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	66	12%
	Last year	67	18%
Teachers	47		61%
Students	91		55%

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

A few parents and majorities of teachers and senior students responded to the on-line surveys. Most parents and students agreed that progress in all subjects was good. Parents were slightly more positive. Most parents agreed that their children enjoyed life at school, while only a majority of students believed so. Only a majority of parents and teachers thought highly of students' attitudes and behaviour, whereas most students believed that behaviour was good. Seventy per cent of parents believed that the school consulted them with regard to their children's education. A significant minority of parents felt that they were not sufficiently involved in their children's education. The survey results reflected positive views of parents and students about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Parents and students were not positive about the limited choices students had in learning. Parents were more positive about staff-student relationships than the students themselves. A significant minority of students thought that the school leaders did not listen to their opinions. More than a quarter of parents and students believed that they were not involved in decision-making. Most parents and students were satisfied with the quality of education provided by 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.

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

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