

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai Arabian American Private School

Report published in April, 2014

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي
Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai Arabian American Private School

Location	Al Muhaisnah
Type of school	Private
Website	www.daaschool.com
Telephone	04-2882222
Address	Dubai, Deira, Al Muhaisana 1 P.O. BOX 232212
Principal	Wasfieh Sh.M.Al Yousef
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18/ KG1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1216
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	867 (71%)
Date of the inspection	10th to 13th March 2014

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The context of the school

Dubai Arabian American Private School is located in Al Muhaisnah. Most students were from Emirati backgrounds. Almost all students were learning English as an additional language.

The school followed the US curriculum based on the Common Core Standards in English and mathematics. It followed the California State standards in science and the Ministry of Education guidance for Islamic Education and Arabic. Grade 12 students gained a high school certificate and sat external examinations for US university entry. Students were taught in mixed gender groups from Kindergarten to Grade 3. From Grade 4 onwards, boys and girls were taught separately.

The school roll had increased from 960 at the time of the last inspection to 1216 at the time of this one, a 21 percent increase. A majority of new students had started in the elementary section but substantial numbers had also started in the middle and high schools.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Mostly good provision and outcomes in the Kindergarten.

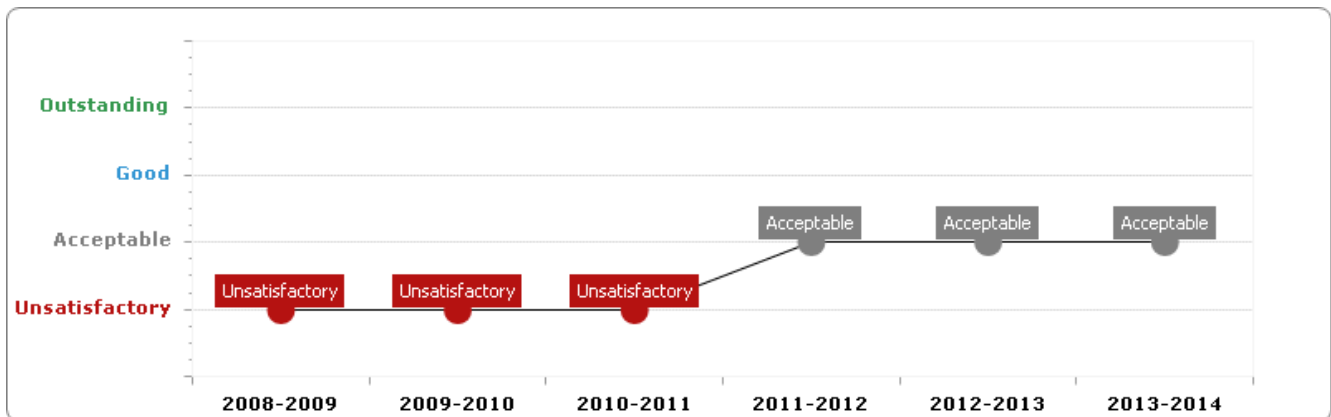
Recommendations

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - Redefining leadership responsibilities to reflect the school's and students' needs more closely;
 - Delegating responsibilities and improving accountability within the new structure to balance workloads and increase effectiveness;
 - Using accurate analysis of attainment data to give governors and the school an accurate view of students' progress and therefore the school's effectiveness;
 - Reducing the proportion of school representation on the governing body and increasing the governors' role in holding the school to account for the quality of its provision and outcomes.
- Improve students' academic attainment and progress by:
 - Providing teacher training to improve the quality of lessons;
 - Monitoring teaching using consistent criteria that link teaching with progress;
 - Using student assessment data to check progress and set targets.
- Complete the implementation of the previous report's recommendations especially those relating to child protection policies and procedures and to provision for students with special educational needs.
- Use externally validated assessments to moderate the school's own assessments and to give staff, the students and their parents, a realistic view of students' attainment in an international context.

Progress since the last inspection

- Improvements to lesson planning had made limited impact on students' critical thinking and independent learning.
- The assessment system had been improved but the analysis and use of the information was still developing.
- Child protection training was planned but not implemented.
- Staff and students were safer than previously but some health and safety issues remained unresolved.
- The identification of students who had a special educational need required further clarification as improved provision had not yet had significant impact.
- The governing board had provided additional resources.

Trend of overall performance



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

	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	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
English				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was acceptable in all key subjects across all subjects except Kindergarten English and mathematics which were good. In Islamic Education, most students in the elementary section had secure knowledge of the life of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Older students could interpret Qur'an verses appropriately. The application of recitation rules was less developed. In Arabic as a first language, a minority of girls in the high school had a good understanding of wider literature. Most other students' learning and application of the language was limited to the content of textbooks. Their language skills were generally at a basic level while their vocabulary and knowledge of grammatical rules were adequate. Their independent writing was still developing but they could express their ideas orally with reasonable clarity and conciseness. In Arabic as an additional language, most students had acceptable skills of speaking and listening. Most students reached expectations in the other areas of language. In English, kindergarten children had good speaking and listening skills. They had an increasing knowledge of letter sounds and skill in word building. Older students developed age-related literacy and presentation skills through the grades. Girls' attainment was generally higher than boys'. In mathematics, the majority of kindergarten children counted up to 50, had a good understanding of age-appropriate place value and could recognise and classify 2D and some 3D shapes. Older students attained best in algebra and graphs, but often made errors in their numeracy skills. In science, students had levels of knowledge of scientific vocabulary, facts and theory in line with international standards. Their skills in investigative science were weaker. Older students could follow teacher-developed laboratory procedures but could not design rigorous investigations to test hypotheses.

In Islamic Education, most students made acceptable progress in their understanding of Islamic values and morals and in learning the rules of recitation. Most made acceptable progress in Arabic as a first language and, in the middle and high schools, girls made good progress in writing, especially in their range of expression. In Arabic as an additional language, students made acceptable progress in reading familiar texts aloud and in responding to direct questions. They made slower progress in conversation skills, independent reading and creative writing. In English, kindergarten children made good progress in learning common words and in copy writing. In the rest of the school, students made acceptable progress in writing longer pieces but their spelling and punctuation were often inaccurate. Older girls made good progress in preparing arguments and presenting them orally. In mathematics, kindergarten children's sound development of practical skills and real world examples helped them make good progress. Older students confidently developed skills in algebra and to calculus, but their poor numeracy skills at times restricted their progress. Girls made better progress than the boys.

Over time, students developed an understanding of a body of scientific knowledge in disciplines of physical and natural science. They increased their understanding of scientific theory in relationship to the real world. Their scientific investigative skills were developing slowly.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were good in Kindergarten and acceptable in other phases. Most students had positive attitudes to learning. They engaged in lessons but were sometimes over-reliant on teachers. However, kindergarten children often showed independence and worked without direct supervision. In all phases except Kindergarten, girls' learning skills were better developed than boys'. Most students worked well together in groups, and typically shared and communicated their learning, often at the front of the class. Their collaborative skills, however, were under-developed, and students rarely developed higher level explanations and communication. In science, for example, students rarely engaged in problem solving, creative thinking, analysis, or evaluation activities. Students' application of their learning to the real world was good in Kindergarten and basic elsewhere, except when students were engaged in challenging tasks that required deeper application. Students' research, enquiry and critical thinking skills were limited and students made little use of ICT in their learning or the under-resourced library for investigative research typically expected at high school level.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal development was good in Kindergarten and in the high school and acceptable elsewhere. Some unsatisfactory behaviour was observed in a few elementary and middle school classes and in the hallways. Almost all students maintained positive attitudes and for the most part, the school was orderly and safe. Eating habits in school were healthy and attendance was at good. Lateness continued to be an issue.

Students' understanding of Islamic values and their cultural awareness were good in Kindergarten and Elementary and acceptable elsewhere. Students enjoyed good relationships with their peers from other countries. They recalled the UAE National Anthem well and referred to features of the UAE's traditions. Students across the school had secure knowledge about the impact of Islamic values on the local society. However, a significant number of students in the middle and high schools did not always show respect and appreciation of other students' cultures and traditions.

Community and environmental responsibility was good in Kindergarten and acceptable elsewhere. Almost all students were aware of their responsibilities in the school community. However there were limited examples of involvement with the local community. Most students worked when instructed. However they did not take the initiative or make decisions on their own. Most students had an awareness of environmental issues but did not regularly engage in significant activities to promote conservation and sustainability.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable elsewhere. Most teachers had a developing knowledge of their subjects and knew how to teach them. They also knew how students learn, but did not always provide sufficiently challenging activities which would raise attainment and progress. Some used resources beyond the textbooks to enhance lessons. Student-teacher interactions were mutually respectful. A majority of teachers used effective strategies which addressed individual students' needs. Teachers shared lesson objectives with their students, and occasionally asked them if the objectives were met. When work was matched to students' needs it was often provided by worksheets rather than teacher-developed projects and activities. The development of students' critical thinking skills was inconsistent across the school, and teachers' use of technology was underdeveloped. The good lessons were those in which classroom management was good, expectations were high and oral or written feedback was given to inform students on how they could improve. Better examples of these were observed in Kindergarten and in English classes.

Assessment was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable across other phases. The school tracked students' progress against individual profiles resulting from diagnostic and international benchmark tests (ACER). However, teachers' analysis of progress data and understanding it, was limited. The school did not keep class or cohort analysis of progress nor set targets for improvement. However, test results and folders of students' work helped provide a measure of students' levels and progress over time. Assessment data were used to modify the curriculum, especially in Kindergarten, where teachers also used their regular observations to set group work that effectively matched the needs of the children. Elsewhere, data were not often used to inform lesson planning. Teachers' knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses was good, and helped teachers accurately help students in lessons. Teachers marked work regularly but written comments to identify the next steps were rare and were not included on reports to parents, other than in Kindergarten. Few teachers made effective use of learning reviews during lessons.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum, based on US Common Core Standards, was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in the other phases. Statutory requirements were met for Arabic and Islamic Education. The curriculum was generally broad and balanced across all phases. It was reviewed at least annually to ensure the progression of students' skills. Teachers in the Kindergarten and Elementary used the curriculum to focus on literacy, numeracy, science and life skills. The high school curriculum was largely driven by adapted texts, workbooks, and copybooks. Students chose business or scientific tracks in Grades 11 and 12. Art, physical education and ICT classes were also provided. There were examples of cross-curricular links in English and science, but these opportunities were rare. Activities that encouraged independent learning, research and critical thinking were not embedded into the curriculum, but were present in secondary girls' Arabic and English. Enrichment activities which reinforced learning included educational field trips to museums and community events.

Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students was acceptable. Lesson planning sometimes included differentiated assignments to meet the needs of students with special educational needs including gifted students. However, the range of curriculum adjustments planned for lessons was limited. Easier text materials for struggling readers were not used, nor were modifications such as audio books or ICT programs for remediation. The school modified curriculum in learning centres for small groups of students in Kindergarten and in English at the elementary level. Students occasionally engaged in independent study projects. There were no elective courses offered in the high school.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety arrangements were unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten and acceptable in other phases. Some of the health and safety issues highlighted in the last inspection report had improved, particularly bus arrival and dismissal. Parking control at the front of school had improved but procedures in the Kindergarten and the girls' drop-off area remained unsatisfactory. The staffing provision, procedures, record keeping and medicine security were outstanding. Emergency procedures were well-planned and exit routes were clearly marked. However, some laboratory chemicals were not stored safely. There was no written child protection policy and only one staff member had received relevant training. The kindergarten outdoor play areas and the grassed areas were poorly maintained. Overall, the buildings were clean and well-maintained and food provision met healthy food standards.

The quality of support was acceptable across the school. Staff had courteous relationships with students. Behaviour was managed adequately in all but a few classrooms. The school monitored attendance well. Procedures to reduce lateness had had only limited success. The school had made improvements in

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identifying students with special educational needs. However, such procedures were not widely applied, and diagnoses did not contain detailed information regarding the specific learning difficulties. The school had adequate personal support for those students identified with special educational needs that enabled them to make acceptable progress. A school social worker, who also acted as the coordinator for the special educational needs programme, monitored the identified students and provided valuable guidance to them.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. Parents recognised the Principal's contributions, to the school's improvement. Leaders had ensured that staff understood and were aligned with the school's aims and direction. There was a poor balance of leadership responsibilities. The current leadership structure reduced opportunities for a concerted drive for improvement. Key leadership roles such as assessment and teaching quality were shared among several leaders. Leaders had brought about some improvements, which demonstrated a capacity for improvement but some projects were late starting and had not had an impact. Senior staff had good relationships. Staff knew of their duties but did not always carry them out consistently. Staff performance management was undeveloped.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. The school had used the DSIB handbook to evaluate its effectiveness but had not used accurate information on student attainment or the quality of teaching to secure their judgements. There was a lack of rigour in data analysis which resulted in inflated views of the school's performance. Self-evaluation did not involve a sufficiently wide sample of stakeholders to check or challenge one another's judgements. There was little involvement of the governing board. The quality of teaching was assessed but had not led to improvements in performance. Teaching staff did not have a clear understanding of what constituted a good quality lesson. School leaders had developed a range of action or improvement plans but these varied in quality and did not provide a secure basis from which to develop the whole school improvement plan.

Links with parents and the community were acceptable. The volunteer Parent Council had established itself and worked regularly with the school's senior leaders. This link and the regular communication with stakeholders were useful additions to the school's partnership to support students' progress. Reports on students' progress kept parents adequately informed. Links with the local community had increased slightly but required further development.

School governance was acceptable. Governors had aspirations for the school and its performance. They appreciated the principal's work in securing the school's initial improvement but did not hold leaders to account. Communications between the school and governors sometimes lacked clarity and did not always result in prompt action. The inclusion of staff members on the governing board was a well-intentioned attempt to increase effectiveness but the current imbalance restricted rigour and objectivity. There were regular meetings and visits to the school.

Resourcing, accommodation and management were acceptable. The day-to-day management of the school was effective. A minority of teaching staff were underqualified. The facilities were satisfactory and enabled the school curriculum to be taught. Staff training was effective in the Kindergarten but was less so in other parts of the school. There had not been sufficient training for child protection. Resources were sufficient but the school lacked a well-stocked library and classroom computing equipment.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school had made improvements in its special educational needs programme since the last inspection. The school's social worker and kindergarten leader, led the identification of students with special educational needs. The social worker worked in partnership with subject leaders to guide services and monitor the progress of these students. At the time of the inspection 18 students had been identified as having a special educational need in Kindergarten and a further nine in Grades 1-12. Staff did not have sufficient expertise to identify the full spectrum of needs. Those identified had individual action plans to guide improvement. Their progress was regularly tracked, and modifications to the plan were made as needed. Teachers had been given some training on differentiation but expressed a need for more to gain proficiency in meeting the needs of all. In most lessons, low attaining students were given differentiated assignments and extra guidance. The school did not use approaches such as, easier or age appropriate text materials for struggling readers, ICT equipment and programs, audio tapes of textbooks or graphic organisers. The school had implemented some extra support programmes. For example there were learning support centres in Kindergarten and the elementary phase, and a peer tutoring program for Grades 4-7. Most students with special educational needs made acceptable progress in key subjects, and a few made good progress. Gifted and talented students did not often exceed the acceptable progress levels of other students. This was because there was a lack of challenge and focus on critical thinking skills in most lessons.

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

The teaching of Arabic as a first language was adequate overall. The curriculum followed the Ministry of Education standards and textbooks, with a few extra activities. The school matched the time requirements for lessons and followed the National Curriculum document standards for the subject. Some teaching used this guidance well to create interesting and lively challenges. The school began the Arabic curriculum during the kindergarten phase and this provided students with a solid introduction. The school had appropriate resources to support its curriculum and a few additional programmes in reading and independent writing were in place but these had a limited impact. The curriculum was regularly reviewed but subsequent modifications were limited. Almost all lessons had learning objectives but these did not challenge the most able and in some cases did not lead to good linguistic development for a significant proportion of students. Teachers had good subject knowledge and many tried to develop collaborative learning with their students but with limited success. The majority of teachers made some use of information technology. They spoke clearly and modelled good language for students in order to help them improve their speaking and listening skills. However, their development of critical thinking and investigative learning was weak. The writing component in the curriculum for the subject was limited and needed significant improvement.

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	42	6%
	Last year	68	13%
Teachers	10		11%
Students	29		13%

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

A few parents responded to this year's survey, about half of last year's total. A similar small proportion of teachers and students also completed their surveys. Almost all parents were pleased with the school's performance but a small minority were dissatisfied with the school's dealing with incidents of bullying. A minority of parents felt that there had been some improvements to the school facilities, the children's learning and preparation for the next stage of life. A minority of parents felt that time spent on homework was not appropriate. A majority of teachers thought that teaching and learning were good. They agreed that the school supported their professional development. Most students' responses to the survey items were positive but a minority of students did not think that students were well-behaved. A minority felt that there were not enough opportunities to learn about Emirati heritage and traditions.

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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