

INSPECTION REPORT

Raffles International School West Campus

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Raffles International School West Campus

Location	Umm Suqeim
Type of school	Private
Website	www.rafflesis.com
Telephone	04 427 1351/2
Address	PO Box 122900, Dubai
Principal	Mr. Brian Marquand
Curriculum	UK/IB
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	4-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	1,389
Number of Emirati students	128 (9%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 13th to Thursday 16th February 2012

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The context of the school

The school was founded in 2008 and is located in Um Suqeim. At the time of the inspection, it had 1389 students from four to 18 years of age, from Kindergarten to Grade 12. This year was the first year the school had students entered in Grade 12. Of the student population, about nine per cent were Emirati. A wide range of other nationalities included sizeable numbers of Indian, French and Russian and other European students. Almost a quarter spoke English as a first language but, for 43 per cent, English was their 'best known' language.

The school had a mixed international curriculum. From Kindergarten to Grade 5, there was an International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum following the Primary Years Programme (PYP). In the secondary phase, from Grades 6 to 8, students followed a course which led to two years of study for the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) in Grades 9 and 10. Students followed the Diploma Programme (DP) of the IB curriculum in Grades 11 and 12. The provision for Arabic and Islamic Education followed the Ministry of Education curricular guidelines. Students sat for IGCSE exams and the IB Diploma, the latter for the first time this year. The school was authorised to teach the IB diploma programme while the PYP programme in the Kindergarten and primary phases held IB candidate status.

There were 120 teachers; almost all had teaching qualifications. Many teachers joined the school at the start of the year because of a large intake of new students. Teachers came from a variety of countries, especially India, the UK and South Africa. There were 28 classroom assistants. The Principal had been in post for two years.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Raffles International School West had improved markedly since the previous inspection and now provided a good education for its students. The good teaching throughout the school meant that students' learning and progress were mostly good. The positive ethos within classrooms stemmed from teachers' confidence in their subjects and their respectful rapport with students. Students acquired a healthy interest in learning and developed strong social skills as well as an excellent environmental awareness. Learning was well supported by an improved curriculum that ensured progression through the school and sufficient

enrichment to motivate students. Students rightly felt safe and cared for at school, and knew that staff valued their opinions.

The recent improvements to the school had resulted directly from very focused and organised leadership and management. Senior leaders had a clear understanding of what was good in the school and what required improvement. Many staff were involved in the creation and implementation of the detailed action plans and most goals had been reached, including the recommendations from the previous report. The school recognised that there was still some way to go with assessment practices but it had achieved much in developing teaching, learning, the quality of support for students and links with parents. Students' progress had also improved, including in Arabic. The student population had increased rapidly in a short space of time and so the school had been successful in managing change in a context of growth.

Key strengths

- The improvements in teaching and learning that have resulted in students making good progress in almost all subjects;
- The good behaviour and thoughtfulness of students, together with their sense of civic responsibility and excellent awareness of environmental issues;
- The broad and more coherent curriculum that was enabling students to develop independent learning skills and a respect for learning, and so achieve well;
- The quality of care and support for all students;
- The dedicated, clear-sighted and resolute leadership that gave the school a clear direction and impetus to ensuring school improvement.

Recommendations

- Build on the improvements in the attainment of Arabic to ensure that teaching is of a consistently good quality.
- Ensure that teachers make routine use of assessment information to set work that meets the needs of all groups of students and provides a high level of challenge.
- Maximise the opportunities for children in the Kindergarten to learn through play-based enquiry and independent learning.
- Ensure that staff measure the success of lessons and other activities by the quality of the outcomes for students.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good
Science				
Attainment	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good

While students' attainment in Islamic Education was acceptable in primary, it was good in secondary and post-16. Most students had a clear understanding of the Prophet's life, but recitation skills were less well developed. Arabic attainment, both as a first and as an additional language, remained acceptable. Reading and listening comprehension skills were good. Writing was good in the upper secondary phase and acceptable elsewhere. Students' attainment in other key subjects was good. In English, students had a

good vocabulary and knowledge of grammar. Their speaking, listening and reading were confident; their expression through writing was less secure. Improved attainment in mathematics in primary and secondary meant that all students had good skills in calculation, data handling and geometry. Attainment in science had remained similar to last year, not higher in secondary and post-16 because of students' limited abilities to refine and present information in a variety of ways. Students' progress was good in almost all subjects and phases. The only exception was in Arabic as an additional language in secondary where progress was acceptable. Here, students did not develop their speaking and writing skills enough and so could not express themselves confidently. Progress in reading and listening was better. Progress in all subjects was enhanced by opportunities for independent learning in lessons, so that students could learn at their own pace. This meant, for example, progress in mathematics was strengthened when students applied what they were learning to everyday situations, and more able students could make connections more quickly. In science, practical investigations reinforced students' understanding and allowed them to draw their own conclusions. Although progress in Kindergarten was good, there were fewer opportunities for children to learn for themselves. The progress of students with special educational needs was good in English and mathematics and acceptable in other subjects where the level of support in lessons was not as effective.

The attainment and progress of Emirati students were almost exactly the same as those of other students. This was confirmed by the school's extensive assessment data. There were minor variations in examination and test data, but little differences of significance. Similarly, Emirati students performed at the same level as their peers in lessons.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

Students behaved well in lessons and around the school. They were courteous to each other and respectful to teachers and staff. They demonstrated a positive work ethic and enjoyed learning. They were happy to adopt a healthy life-style; they selected healthy food options and participated readily in physical activities. Attendance had improved and the school's data showed that it was good. Students in upper grades clearly understood Islamic values and their impact on contemporary society. They showed respect towards the culture and traditions of the UAE. In the naturally multi-cultural school community, students were aware of the need to respect other cultures. Students had a detailed understanding of how Dubai had developed and most students understood how and why Dubai and other Emirates had changed. Students understood their responsibilities as members of the school community and took on key roles. Almost all cared for their school and local environment; they kept the school clean and tidy, and planted flowers with local community organisations. Older students understood the need to protect local, national and world resources, and about issues such as global warming, recycling, clean energy sustainability and conservation.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

Most teachers used their good subject knowledge effectively to plan well-structured lessons. In most lessons, expectations were sufficiently high and teaching strategies promoted independent enquiry, research and critical thinking. These key features of the IB programme were being promoted well in most phases. In almost all lessons, teachers' positive rapport with students prompted positive attitudes to learning. Students responded particularly well to opportunities to work collaboratively and effective group work was a feature of most lessons. In a majority of lessons, electronic boards and other resources were used well to stimulate interest and engagement. There were examples of outstanding teaching in English, mathematics and science in which students responded enthusiastically to the particularly high level of challenge. The majority of teachers capitalised on students' capacity to work independently and this had a positive impact on students' progress. In a minority of lessons, expectations were too low and learning tasks were not differentiated so that some students found them too easy while others found them too hard. In Kindergarten, not all teachers made the most of opportunities to promote language development and children's learning through play. The teaching seen in art, geography, history, and physical education was mostly good.

In most lessons students were highly motivated and concentrated well. They listened carefully to their teachers and were keen to answer questions. The best learning took place when students were able to apply their developing skills, knowledge and understanding to different contexts. When working in pairs and small groups, most students demonstrated their ability to take responsibility for their learning. Almost all students were willing to share ideas and listen carefully to each other's views. They had the confidence to question when they were uncertain or needed more information. However, in a minority of lessons there were too few opportunities for students to learn independently of the teacher.

Assessment systems to collect data about students' attainment and progress were acceptable in all phases except post-16 where it was good. The information helped the school to plan its development. However, the tracking of attainment was more established than the tracking of progress. Therefore, progress information was not useful enough to help teachers to adjust their teaching accordingly. Although teachers had a good informal knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses, this was not used sufficiently to accelerate progress in lessons. At post-16, the small classes enabled teachers to identify needs more effectively, and provide more personalised support to promote learning. Overall, students received helpful feedback about their progress during lessons, but the marking of their work was not effective enough to help them refine their work further.

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good

Collaboration by curriculum leaders had resulted in a well-planned curriculum with good continuity across most areas of the school. At IGCSE and IB Diploma levels, students were offered a good choice of subjects to suit a range of interests, abilities and language levels. Review and analysis of the requirements of the diploma programme ensured that necessary skills were being developed throughout the secondary curriculum. Transitions between phases of the school were good. However, more coherence between implementation of the curriculum in Kindergarten and the rest of the PYP programme was needed. This would ensure a continuous progression in all of the skills required for students to be successful in the school's chosen enquiry-based curriculum. While the curriculum met the needs of most students well, students of higher ability and those with strong English language skills were not always challenged by the way in which the curriculum was implemented, particularly in Kindergarten. Extra-curricular activities were plentiful and learning in the local community and environmental activities were outstanding features of the curriculum.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good	Good

The school building and facilities were kept clean and well maintained, and there was easy access to all floors and areas for all students. Regular emergency evacuation practices were carried out efficiently and details logged. Cabinets storing chemicals were locked and medicine cabinets were secure. Emergency equipment, such as first-aid boxes, eye-wash basins and fire hoses were easily accessible. Good attention was given to the promotion of health, especially in the cafeteria which had won an award in 2011. The school medical staff also played a vital role in addressing students' physical and emotional needs. Although the school has improved its child protection procedures and introduced some training for staff, its practices were not yet fully effective.

The well-being of students was a high priority for senior leaders and teachers. The clear and consistent management of behaviour continued to have a positive impact. Involvement of parents in this process was good through communication diaries and other direct contact. The process for identifying students with special education needs was efficient and well documented. Assessment of their needs involved parents, teachers and other staff, as well as external agencies. Support for these students was better in small groups than in whole-class activities. There was good advice in the senior school for students about their further education and career choices, as well as support their well-being. The school had good systems in place to promote attendance and punctuality.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

There was a strong commitment to school improvement by senior leaders based on shared values, realistic vision and a clear understanding of what needed to improve. Leadership was efficiently delegated and organised across all subjects and phases. Senior leaders were aspirational, flexible and had the students' interests at the forefront of their plans. The school had done very well to cope with a significant influx on new teachers and students, and still improve its provision. This demonstrated good capacity to develop the school further.

The school knew itself well because of regular and mainly accurate self-evaluation at all levels of management. In this way, the school was sure of its strengths and able to address its weaknesses, such as the quality of Arabic teaching and the need for more resources. The evaluation of teaching through classroom observations was systematic and well-focused, although not sufficiently linked to the learning outcomes for students. Development plans were comprehensive, and had been instrumental in bringing about positive changes. The school had made good progress in addressing the recommendations from the last report, especially in improving teaching and learning, and harmonising the curriculum.

Parents were increasingly involved in the school through the Advisory Council and the parents' association. An enthusiastic minority supported the school for example in fund-raising, school visits, hearing children read and special events, like the UAE National Day. Parents knew that their concerns were listened to and, where possible, acted upon decisively. Good opportunities existed for them to learn about their children's progress through helpful reports and regular meetings with teachers. Excellent newsletters kept parents fully up-to-date. Good community links included support for a wildlife rescue centre in Dubai and a primary school in Kenya.

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The school board provided robust and enlightened direction for the school. Governors' professional expertise ensured that shrewd decisions underpinned the growth of the school, with clear reference to the needs of the students. They monitored the school's activities carefully and had clear systems to hold all senior leaders to account. They routinely sought and responded to the views of stakeholders especially through the Advisory Council which included two members of the community and two parents. However, the Council did not involve a wide enough representation of the community.

The school had invested wisely in its resources, both human and physical. A new administrator had strengthened the day-to-day running of the school, so that all activities ran smoothly. There was a suitable number of qualified staff with a range of experience and skills. However, not all Kindergarten teachers were sufficiently skilled in best early years practice. The building was sizeable with a very good range of facilities that included two swimming pools, extensive sports areas, ample science and computer laboratories, various specialist rooms and a spacious library. The range of books in the library was extensive. Resources amply met the needs of the coursework for all students.

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	268	25%
	Last year	199	24%
Teachers	63		50%
Students	92		92%

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

A quarter of the parents responded to the survey. Of these, most were positive about the school, although they tended to agree rather than strongly agree with the questions. Parents approved of most aspects of the school, especially their children's progress in English, their environmental awareness and the approachability of staff. However, a small minority of parents raised concerns in almost all aspects, including the quality of Arabic teaching. Students had similar views to their parents and said they did not know about the quality of some aspects, including attainment. Furthermore, about a quarter of them thought that their understanding of Islam was not good enough, they did not lead a healthy lifestyle, the school did not listen to their views and that the curricular choice at post-16 was too narrow. Teachers were generally positive in their support for the school. A minority expressed concerns about learning support and about the effectiveness of leadership.

What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

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How to contact us

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

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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