



National Agenda



Early years



Special educational  
needs and disabilities



Innovation

## Inspection Report 2015-2016

GEMS International School-Al Khail

Curriculum: IB

Overall rating: Acceptable

Read more about the school



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



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

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## School information

### General information



Location	Al Khail
Type of school	Private
Opening year of school	2013
Website	www.gemsinternationalschool-alkhail.com
Telephone	04 3396200
Address	Industrial Area 2 AL Quoz Al Khail
Principal	David Ottaviano
Language of instruction	English
Inspection dates	7 to 10 March 2016

### Students



Gender of students	Boys and girls
Age range	4-15
Grades or year groups	Kindergarten 1 to Grade 9
Number of students on roll	1,127
Number of children in pre-kindergarten	0
Number of Emirati students	28
Number of students with SEND	56
Largest nationality group of students	Indian

### Teachers / Support staff



Number of teachers	106
Largest nationality group of teachers	British
Number of teaching assistants	41
Teacher-student ratio	1:11
Number of guidance counsellors	3
Teacher turnover	30%

### Curriculum



Educational permit / Licence	IB
Main curriculum	IB
External tests and examinations	MAP, IBT
Accreditation	PYP
National Agenda benchmark tests	IBT



## Summary for parents and the community

**GEMS International School-Al Khail** was inspected by DSIB from 7 to 10 March 2016. The overall quality of education provided by the school was found to be **acceptable**.

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

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





### How well did the school perform overall?

Overall, GEMS International School Al Khail provided an **acceptable** standard of education for its students.

- Students' attainment was mostly acceptable in the Kindergarten (KG) and in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) except in science where it was good. Attainment was acceptable in most subjects in the Middle Years Programme (MYP) but it was weak in Islamic education and Arabic as a first language.
- The personal development of students in all phases was very good. The understanding of Islamic values and Emirati and world cultures was acceptable in KG and good in the rest of the school.
- The quality of teaching was good in the KG and the PYP and acceptable in the MYP. Assessment was acceptable overall.
- The school had a good curriculum, which needed further modification in parts of the school.
- Health and safety arrangements were very good and the school's quality of support was mostly acceptable. It was good in PYP.
- Since the school opened leaders had managed change well and had created a settled, improving school with very good staffing and facilities. The school's self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Good governance and good parental and community links supported the school well.



### What did the school do well?

- Most students made good progress in English, mathematics and science and those at an early stage of acquiring English made rapid progress.
- Throughout the school, students' personal development was strong and they acquired good learning skills.
- The school had very good staffing, facilities and resources, a good curriculum and very good standards of health and safety.
- Leadership and good governance, and support from parents had managed the school's rapid growth well and secured a good environment for learning.





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

- Bring about improvements in relevant areas of students' achievement by:
  - ensuring greater consistency in teaching quality
  - increasing the rigour of lesson monitoring
  - improving the accuracy of assessment analysis and its subsequent use in class.
- Produce a whole school strategic plan and relevant action plans that clearly show the measurable impact on student achievement of the actions taken.
- Improve the accuracy of school self-evaluation.



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

- The progress of students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) varied across grade levels and subjects from acceptable in Arabic as a first language to good in mathematics and science. The goals set for students did not always ask enough of them.
- Parents received regular reports that kept them informed of their children's progress and next steps.
- In addition to written reports, teachers and counsellors communicated frequently with parents about their children's academic and personal development. For children with a learning support assistant (LSA), there was more frequent communication.
- Most parents were involved in the development and review of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) for their children. 'The quality of support provided by the LSAs varied and was sometimes a source of tension between the school and the parents.
- Parents were very appreciative of the school's inclusive ethos and most were pleased with their children's academic progress and personal development. Some parents with children in upper grades expressed the need for more guidance about their children's future, both in the school and beyond.

### National Agenda Parameter



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

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

#### Main points:

- The school met the registration requirements of the National Agenda Parameter.
- Progress towards meeting the National Agenda targets was not secure.
- Governors, owners and the principal, promoted awareness and understanding of the National Agenda and the National Agenda targets among the majority of its stakeholders.
- Core curriculum leaders were in the process of identifying the cohorts of students who would produce part of school's future results that would be directly related to TIMSS and PISA.
- The curriculum was adequately aligned to TIMSS and PISA requirements. Planning for continuity and progression in the National Agenda – relevant subject skills and knowledge was in progress for TIMSS and at the very early stages of development for PISA.
- Development of critical thinking, investigation and application to real-life situations were regular features in most lessons.
- The majority of students used information technology and other resources effectively to develop their research skills.

## Innovation in education

The *UAE Vision 2021* sets out the National Agenda for the UAE to be among the most innovative nations in the world. The National Innovation Strategy sets the context for 'innovation' and 'innovative leadership'. It provides a basis for evaluating public and private schools in order to deliver a world-class education for all children in the UAE.

Innovation is driven by a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. It is based on curiosity, the willingness to take risks, to experiment and to test assumptions as well as questioning and challenging the status quo. Being innovative is about looking beyond what we currently do well, identifying the great ideas of tomorrow and putting them into practice.



## Promoting a culture of innovation:

- School leaders were aware of the national innovation agenda and had identified key personnel to lead this. When teaching allowed, students demonstrated a strong potential to use innovation skills, enquiry and critical thinking, especially in the PYP, and in science in both the PYP and the MYP. The school made innovative use of internal corridor spaces to display student learning, both within the main curriculum and through extra-curricular projects. The PYP and MYP curriculum frameworks had problem-solving, inquiry and critical thinking embedded across subject areas and phases, although the school had not yet taken full advantage of the opportunities this afforded them, and so was not yet using students' innovation potential.



Overall school performance				
Acceptable				

1. Students' achievement				
		KG	PYP	MYP
Islamic education 	Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Weak
	Progress	Not applicable	Acceptable	Weak
Arabic as a first language 	Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Weak
	Progress	Not applicable	Acceptable	Weak
Arabic as an additional language 	Attainment	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Not applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable
English 	Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics 	Attainment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Good	Good	Acceptable
Science 	Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable
	Progress	Acceptable	Good	Good

	KG	PYP	MYP
Learning skills	Good	Good	Good

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

	KG	PYP	MYP
Personal development	Very good	Very good	Very good
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Acceptable	Good	Good
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Good	Good	Good

## 3. Teaching and assessment

	KG	PYP	MYP
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Good	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

## 4. Curriculum

	KG	PYP	MYP
Curriculum design and implementation	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum adaptation	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable

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

	KG	PYP	MYP
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Very good	Very good	Very good
Care and support	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable

## 6. Leadership and management

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



## Main inspection report

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

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



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

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

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

KG		
Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Not applicable	Not applicable
Arabic as a first language	Not applicable	Not applicable
Arabic as an additional language	Not applicable	Not applicable
English	Acceptable	Good
Mathematics	Acceptable	Good
Science	Acceptable	Acceptable

- In English, children made good and sometimes, very good progress in listening and understanding. They were able to answer in short sentences in response to teachers' questions. As they moved through KG, children grew in confidence in speaking about a variety of topics and their vocabulary increased significantly. Most children could recognise the letters of the alphabet, identify initial sounds and were beginning to read simple words. By the time they left KG, most children could hold a conversation with a variety of children and adults talking about a range of topics that they have studied. An increasing number were reading simple texts, decoding words independently using a variety of cues and writing short, legible sentences with clear meaning.
- Most children started in KG with varied numerical skills. As they moved through the classes they developed a good understanding of the concept of number and how to use mathematics in everyday situations. They could count, recognise numbers and put numbers in order to at least 20, and often beyond. The majority could add two, single digit numbers and had a basic understanding of place value. They could create a repeating pattern following a template and almost all could recognise and name two dimensional shapes.
- In science, most children in KG1 had a basic understanding of the difference between man-made and natural materials. A minority could sort them into these two categories. In KG2, children knew that plants grow from seeds and that they needed soil, water and sunlight to grow. They could identify some of the products of plants, such as fruits. Children were beginning to ask their own questions and to develop an understanding of how to carry out an investigation according to scientific method.

## 1. Students' achievement

### PYP

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

- In Islamic education, most students had secure knowledge of the pillars of Islam and its faith. They recognised the benefits of all types of Salah (prayers) and the procedures needed to apply them. They developed an adequate understanding of a range of Islamic values and manners such as those related to table etiquettes and respect for norms in public places. Most students' recitation skills were developing in line with expectations. Students could adequately draw conclusions from a range of simple events from Prophet Mohamed's Seerah (biography). However, consistency in making relevant reference to the Holy Quran and the Hadith was still developing. Most students could adequately build on their understanding of key Islamic values to develop as caring, respectful and devoted believers.
- In Arabic as a first language, the majority of students attainment levels that were in line with curriculum expectations. Most students' were articulate and expressed their ideas confidently. Their writing skills were weaker, especially in extended writing, they made slow progress due to the lack of opportunity to practice their writing. Most students made acceptable progress in lessons in relation to the learning objectives. More able students did not achieve as well, because the work set for them lacked challenge.
- In Arabic as an additional language, most students attained levels that were in line with expectations. Constant exposure to instructions and communications in standard Arabic ensured a good level of language acquisition among most students. Students asked direct questions confidently and used an adequate range of familiar vocabulary. However, in lessons and in their most recent work, most students made adequate progress in their communication skills but less so in their independent reading and writing skills. Students of Arabic heritage made less than expected progress in relation to their ability.
- Students' attainment in English was at acceptable levels of achievement when measured against curriculum standards. Younger students wrote in short, accurate sentences. Older students produced more extended creative writing, which effectively expressed their viewpoints. Throughout the PYP, students had a secure understanding of a wide range of reading texts. They were articulate in expressing ideas and used learning technology confidently to research and solve problems. Most groups of students made good progress, particularly when they worked at their own pace in completing tasks. Some students with SEND did not have effective support to enable them to make good progress. English language learners (ELL) were very well supported through a series of interventions, which ensured that their use and understanding of English improved rapidly.
- In mathematics, the majority of students made good progress in the skills of numeracy, data handling, problem solving and patterns. They applied their knowledge when, for example, investigating tessellations or researching weather patterns in different countries. Their knowledge of mathematical terminology had a positive impact on their progress in developing their analytic skills. Most reached the expected level of attainment in the curriculum.

- In science, recent external tests indicated that only 40% of students attained at or above international standards. At the time of the tests over three quarters of the students were other language learners with many in their first three months in the school. During observed lessons, attainment was better. Progress in written work, presentations and displays was good. Grade 1 discovered trial and error when engineering wolf-proof structures for fairy tale characters. Grade 4 predicted, tested, recorded and successfully compared conclusions about reactions between carbonated drinks and other liquids. Grade 5 students handled abstract concepts and modelled the impact of the sun's gravity on planetary orbits.

MYP		
Subjects	Attainment	Progress
Islamic education	Weak	Weak
Arabic as a first language	Weak	Weak
Arabic as an additional language	Acceptable	Acceptable
English	Acceptable	Good
Mathematics	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science	Acceptable	Good

- In Islamic education, only a majority of students attained levels that were in line with curriculum expectations. Most groups taught in English, attained better than their peers in the Arabic classes. They communicated their knowledge with adequate fluency and could appropriately elaborate on ideas conveyed in the contexts of revelation. The majority could deduce, conclude and infer meaning from the Holy Qur'an and Hadith to support their understanding of key Islamic values such as modesty, solidarity and acknowledging the gifts of Allah to Mankind. The application of recitation rules to prescribed verses from the Holy Qur'an was insecure overall among the majority of the students, and the quality of the written work of a significant group among the Arabic speaking students was weak.
- In Arabic as a first language, the majority of students struggled to express their views and ideas orally but could give simple answers. This slowed the development of their critical thinking skills. The reading of familiar text was a challenge for a significant minority of students. Writing attainment was weak due to several factors: minimal exposure to different writing styles and few opportunities to practice extended writing. Although girls made slightly better progress than boys, students generally achieved below expectations in all aspects of the subject.
- Most students in Arabic as an additional language attained levels that were in line with curriculum expectations. Students asked direct questions, they worked in groups and individually and produced researched pieces of work. Students used technology well to respond to challenging activities. Most students read with understanding. When working in groups and individually in an enquiry-based environment, students wrote independently and creatively and made steady progress. Students evaluated their work and had begun to set targets to help them reach a good level of attainment.
- Students achieved acceptable levels of attainment in English when measured against curriculum standards. They made good progress in speaking and listening when measured against their starting points. Most students spoke confidently. They had an acceptable understanding of a range of texts from different genres. They made good progress in their writing skills and developed fluency and accuracy. English language learners (ELL) learned to read and understand texts quickly. For example, Grade 9 students had a good understanding of the complex themes in the novel 'Lord of the Flies'. Students with SEND did not always receive the necessary support to enable them to make good progress.



- In mathematics, the large majority of students attained in line with expected levels. They applied their knowledge when, for example, designing their own dream bedroom or investigating different patterns of tiles. Students' reasoning skills and understanding of three-dimensional shapes were emerging. Students made better progress in problem solving. However, their progress in developing skills in algebra, data analysis, conceptual understanding and application of functions was slow. The most able students did not always make expected progress due to the low level of challenge.
- In science, although students made good progress in acquiring scientific skills and critical thinking skills that led to good research projects, attainment overall was only in line with curriculum expectations. Grade 6 took time to consolidate their understanding, when they designed experimental methods for Grade 4 students to follow. Grade 7 explored scientific variables and very successfully constructed working machines. Outcomes were more variable for Grade 8 as they devised and tested experimental methods. The experiments they had constructed bore little relationship to real problems. In contrast, Grade 9 students brought skills together as they eloquently shared their detailed discoveries from research into real world issues of glucose absorption and diabetes.

	KG	PYP	MYP
Learning skills	Good	Good	Good

- Almost all students were enthusiastic in lessons, even when teaching was less effective. They relished opportunities to discover things for themselves and to solve problems individually and with others. Even the youngest children could work independently for sustained periods. The majority of students knew what they had to do to take their learning to the next level.
- Students in all grades routinely discussed their work with their classmates, sharing ideas and learning from each other. This was dependent on the skill of the teacher in facilitating this approach. In a few lessons, students did not have the breadth of vocabulary to explain their understanding in depth. A few students needed consistent teacher guidance and supervision.
- Most topics enabled students to see the relevance of their learning in the world and to make links across other aspects of their learning. In Islamic education, students talked enthusiastically about discussions with their parents about Salah. In English, students compared newspaper articles read in class with events in their own lives. In science, they considered the impact of exercise on their bodies.
- In most lessons, students developed, to varying degrees, a range of skills necessary for learning, living and working in the 21st Century. Critical thinking was a common feature of most lessons. Students planned and carried out investigations. They could confidently present their learning to their peers. They used technology to glean information and developed their analytical skills when reading it for its relevance.

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

	KG	PYP	MYP
Personal development	Very good	Very good	Very good

- Almost all students had positive attitudes towards their school life and their work. They were confident and articulate in lessons with both visitors and classmates. They were reflective and responded positively to critical feedback and set goals for themselves.
- Students showed very good and consistently disciplined behaviour. They responded well to adults and others. They felt very safe from bullying and spoke maturely about cyber bullying even at a young age.
- Students' concern for others was evident when they worked together well during lessons. More able students helped others in their work and all aspects of school life. Almost all students celebrated the differences of a diverse school community.
- Students were very aware of healthy living issues. Children in KG spoke about healthy food. Students in PYP articulated very well their learning about choices for healthy life-style and well-being. Students in the MYP appreciated their choices of food as well as their involvement in sports activities.
- Students' attendance was very good, and their punctuality reflected their positive attitude towards their learning and respect for their school and teachers.

	KG	PYP	MYP
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Acceptable	Good	Good

- Students appreciated the importance of Islam in the lives of the UAE people. They confidently articulated a good understanding of Islam as a religion of peace, respect, love and happiness. They enjoyed celebrating Ramadan, Eids and Hajj with Muslim peers, and were well informed about how the UAE promoted the values and heritage of Islam.
- Students, particularly in the PYP and MYP, talked with enthusiasm about their Emirati friends, their hospitality, love for their heritage and traditions, the desert and national flag. They appreciated the role the late Sheikh Zayed played in uniting the UAE. Students had a good knowledge of the rapid changes Dubai had witnessed thanks to the vision of its leaders.
- Students were proud of their own nationalities and cultures. They enjoyed their 'After School Activity' (ASA) programme. This offered them opportunities to learn more about their own languages and cultures and to explore the world cultures around them. The International Day celebration was a popular event among most students who took pride in celebrating and sharing their wealth of cultural experiences.

	KG	PYP	MYP
<b>Social responsibility and innovation skills</b>	Good	Good	Good

- Students were active members of their school community. They regularly contributed to a range of local charitable activities in support of their community members and organisations. Students volunteered to raise funds in support of disaster-struck Nepal and to help build a school in Africa.
- Students demonstrated a strong work ethic. They knew the values of commitment, dedication, mutual support and care as attributes of success in school and in life. Students were confident in the role their council played in echoing their voice. The outcomes of their creative thinking and self-initiated projects were in the process of being evaluated and next steps identified.
- Students were confident that their school community cared for the environment and understood that it promoted eco-friendly lifestyles. They were aware of the dangers of global warming, but their ideas on how to conserve and preserve nature were not as well developed.

### 3. Teaching and assessment

	KG	PYP	MYP
<b>Teaching for effective learning</b>	Good	Good	Acceptable

- Most teachers had strong subject knowledge and understood the requirements of the International Baccalaureate (IB) framework. They were less secure in Islamic education and in mathematics in the MYP. The most effective teachers were skilled in creating a supportive climate for learning in line with students' ages and stage of development.
- Throughout the school, teachers created vibrant and inspiring learning environments. They used a range of high quality resources, including technology, to motivate students, to support their learning and to facilitate research. Most teachers made good use of the available time. Teaching strategies were usually aligned to the range of learning styles and needs of all students.
- Question and answer sessions engaged students well in discussions in most lessons. The best teachers asked searching questions to stimulate thought. They were skilled in helping students to reflect on what had already been learnt before introducing a new topic or concept. Students had many opportunities to work alongside their classmates but meaningful collaboration was not evident in a significant number of lessons.
- In many lessons, for example in the language learning centres in KG and in ELL sessions throughout the school, teachers had clear and high expectations for their students. Consequently, students were fully focused on learning and achieved well. A minority of teachers had the same expectation for all students regardless of what they already knew, understood and could do.
- Enquiry, questioning and critical thinking were common features in many lessons. At the start of a new topic, the most effective teachers enabled students to reflect on what they knew and what they wanted to find out. Students then took responsibility for their learning, applying and developing a range of skills to solve real life and relevant problems.

- Most teachers, teaching Arabic as a first language in PYP had thorough subject knowledge. They planned their lessons to meet group and individual needs. Teachers created learning environments where students concentrated on their learning. Teachers encouraged students to take responsibility of their learning. In the MYP, teaching was weak. Activities were not matched to individual and group needs.

	KG	PYP	MYP
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

- A new assessment process provided easier access to data through the IB online programme. It was beginning to integrate assessment with teaching, learning and curriculum, by linking to US Common Core, Next Generation Science Standards and UAE's Ministry of Education (MOE) curricula, as well as the PYP and the MYP. It enabled better reporting to parents and supported joint student, staff and parents' target setting meetings.
- Students' outcomes were benchmarked against international standards inconsistently. MAP testing was used in almost all grades for English and mathematics. Shortly before the inspection, IBT tests benchmarked these subjects in three grades and in science. Arabic and Islamic education were compared nationally with MOE standards. Otherwise, the school relied on data moderated during PYP and MYP consultants' visits.
- Students' progress was monitored from baseline testing on entry using MAP data. This was analysed by senior leaders, to identify students displaying variance between attainment and progress. This enabled them to target areas for development. Understanding of the data amongst middle leaders was inconsistent.
- MAP and other assessment data was used well to influence teaching and curriculum adaptation in PYP English, mathematics and Arabic. It had less impact in the MYP. In PYP and MYP science, curriculum based rubrics were used well to evaluate students' work; influencing teaching and adaptation. Tracking in KG and in Islamic education was inconsistent and less reliable.
- KG teachers used their good knowledge of the children to target activities and helped them to self-assess. PYP and MYP English and science teachers knew their students well and frequently involved them in self and peer review. Arabic and mathematics teachers were more aware of students' needs in the PYP than in the MYP.

#### 4. Curriculum

	KG	PYP	MYP
Curriculum design and implementation	Good	Good	Good

- The IB curriculum, underpinned by the Common Core, was effectively planned to provide stimulating learning experiences for most groups of students. It provided breadth and balance of core and non-core subjects e.g. art, music, drama and design technology, matched to the requirements of the IB curriculum. The curriculum reflected the international school community in a UAE setting with a focus on responsibilities as global citizens.

- There was clear curriculum progression in English, mathematics and science, illustrated by the good development of learning skills. Curriculum leaders for the PYP, KG and MYP were aware that transition between phases was an aspect of curriculum which required improvement. The school had started aligning MOE expectations to those of the IB to ensure continuity took place in Islamic education and Arabic.
- The school had introduced pre-diploma choices in Grade 9 that offered elective options within the IB curriculum. Students chose a range of subjects including modern foreign languages, design and technology, visual arts, performance arts, business and politics, featuring a Model United Nations (MUN) project as part of the curriculum. All students continued with six core subject disciplines.
- The curriculum was essentially cross-curricular by design, particularly in KG and PYP where units of inquiry ensured integration of subjects. Teachers' lesson plans showed integrated units throughout PYP, for example a Grade 1 mathematics project on 3D shapes and Dubai buildings. Several MOE topics were included in social studies. MYP cross-curricular links were rudimentary, with some early signs of collaboration between ELL and humanities.
- Curriculum leaders and grade teachers reviewed the curriculum regularly. Analysis of assessment data identified weaknesses that were addressed in reviews. Subsequent changes in English reading and science ensured that the curriculum met the needs of students. The MYP curriculum in mathematics needed further review and development. The UAE social studies curriculum was being reviewed to ensure integration with MOE units.

	KG	PYP	MYP
Curriculum adaptation	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable

- Some good practice in adapting the curriculum to the needs groups of students was evident in the PYP, where teachers matched tasks to students' abilities and supported individuals and groups of students. This was not as evident in KG or MYP. The needs of students' with SEND were not consistently met across the school. ELL students' needs were successfully met through curriculum interventions.
- Teachers in PYP, enabled students to use their initiative and explore ideas in innovative ways. Within the MYP, chances were missed to optimise the opportunities that the IB curriculum provided for innovation. The curriculum offered a wide range of extra-curricular activities to motivate students, including cultural, scientific, sporting and opportunities. There was good provision for additional academic support in English, science and mathematics lessons.
- The curriculum included interesting programmes, which had developed students' knowledge about UAE society. Students were well versed in Islam and its importance within UAE cultural values. Overall, they had a good appreciation of Emirati society and their social responsibilities. Through the PYP units of inquiry, students had a keen understanding of environmental issues.
- The school provided three 40 minute lessons of Arabic for children in KG2. The Arabic programme focused on letter recognition delivered in the form of songs, mime and stories.



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

	KG	PYP	MYP
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Very good	Very good	Very good

- Procedures for safeguarding students were effective. The school educated students and their parents about safer use of the Internet and other teenage issues. Counsellors addressed any bullying concerns robustly. They supported the emotional well-being of all students through the curriculum.
- The school had introduced a new visitor management system with ID cards for parents and carers, contributing to site security. Well-managed indoor and outdoor spaces ensured a clean and hygienic environment. The pool and outdoor play spaces were shaded, well maintained and appropriately supervised. The school communicated hydration and activity alerts during extreme weather.
- The facilities management department ensured the maintenance of buildings and equipment through termly audit. All necessary safety checks were undertaken either internally or through external contracts. Risk assessments were a strong feature of activity or excursion planning and of the facilities management. Evacuation and other essential drills were regular and recorded with remedial actions taken when necessary.
- The premises and facilities met the needs of all students. There was very good provision for expressive arts, as well as swimming and other sports. Lifts allowed access to all floors and evacuation chairs ensured safe escape for students with physical needs. Laboratories were limited but safely equipped. Further laboratories for older students were under construction.
- Safe and healthy living was promoted through the curriculum. Grade 3 investigated the impacts of fizzy drinks on teeth. Grade 9 students were educating one another through presentations on glucose absorption and type two diabetes. The substantial extra-curricular programme and CAS (Creativity, Activity and Service) element of the IB programme promoted many physical activities. The café's menus encouraged a balanced diet.

	KG	PYP	MYP
Care and support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

- Relationships between staff and students were very good across the school. Behaviour expectations were clear and positive and students were mostly well-behaved and respectful to adults and to one another, with minimal adult intervention.
- There were effective systems to manage and promote attendance and punctuality. Unexplained absence and lateness were dealt with. The link between high achievements and good attendance was promoted.
- Students with a range of special educational needs were admitted into the school. However, not all needs were fully identified. A system for identifying students who were gifted and talented was in the very early stages of development.



- The team of SEND specialists provided well-developed systems and procedures, and effective support in pull-out sessions. However, support in classrooms was inconsistent. It ranged from, at best, seamless inclusion and skillful differentiation, to, at worst, lack of support or modification. As a result, the overall progress of students with send was only acceptable. The one-to-one support provided by the learning support assistants (LSAs) was very variable .
- The attributes of the IB learner profile were evident throughout the school and students' well-being and personal, social and emotional development was a high priority. There was a structured programme of support for students, parents and teachers, guided by experienced counsellors.

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

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

Acceptable

- The school had an inclusive approach and admitted students with a range of special educational needs. The SEND team of four qualified and experienced teachers provided leadership, a well-structured system and broadly effective support for students and teachers.
- The school identified most students' needs promptly and accurately, using KHDA categories, although not all levels of support had been included on the lists. Procedures for admission, referral, assessment and preparation of individual education plans were clear and included input from parents and relevant external organisations.
- Parents were appreciative of the school's inclusive ethos, the quality of support and their children's academic and personal development. Most were involved in the development and review of the IEP for their children and were kept informed of progress and updated targets.
- Students were supported through a combination of pull-out, in-class modifications, and one-to-one LSA. In-class support and modification were very variable across grade levels and subject areas, although they were stronger in the PYP. There were several significant pedagogical and logistical issues relating to the LSAs that needed strategic consideration.
- The progress of students with SEND was very weak in Arabic as a first language; acceptable in Islamic education, Arabic as an additional language and English; and good in mathematics and science.. Although IEPs were reviewed regularly, goals were not always current or detailed enough, and often seemed to lack appropriate levels of challenge.

## 6. Leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership

Acceptable

- Good leadership over time and recently strengthened by the principal's appointment had established a distinctive school vision. This had informed its successful work with parents and enabled it to set up structures, systems and processes that had sustained it through a period of rapid expansion. Leaders incorporated the UAE priorities in their developmental work to cater for students' wide range of needs.

- The principal and other leaders had a strong background in the school's International Baccalaureate provision and had secured mandated status for the PYP. Their leadership had secured some good quality teaching and learning in most parts of the school and while it catered very well for students new to English, its work with students with SEND needed further improvement.
- Staff, students and parents enjoyed good relationships. Staff were positive about their work and the part they played in shaping this growing school. As it grew, so the delegation of authority spread. Teamwork was a good feature of this school and was evident in the lesson planning and in the involvement in groups to carry out school development tasks.
- Leadership had the capacity to secure further school improvement. Its management of change had built a settled school where students felt valued and settled quickly into a patterns of work in which the majority made good progress in English, mathematics and science. Leadership had indicated its determination to make improvements in students' progress in Islamic education and Arabic.
- Leaders had worked hard together to improve students' personal development and build a caring school ethos in which students embraced diversity and worked harmoniously together. They had enjoyed some success in building school traditions such as charitable giving and respect for others. They had secured mostly acceptable school standards of attainment and with governance had ensured that the school complied with statutory requirements.

#### School self-evaluation and improvement planning

Acceptable

- The school had set up systems such as those to keep track of students' progress, monitor the quality of teaching or arrive at a whole school evaluation. They were sufficient to help produce the school's development plan, to plan training for teachers and to give the school a reasonably accurate picture of its effectiveness. These needed further refinement and to be used more consistently.
- The school monitored teaching quality through senior staff lesson observations and feedback discussions. The school also encouraged teachers to look at one another's practice together and help to improve aspects of their work. These systems gave senior leaders a good general picture of teaching strengths and weaknesses. These now needed to be more rigorous and systematically carried out.
- The school had a detailed development plan that listed many appropriate areas for improvement. It had recently been revised and updated. It was in line with the UAE's national and school priorities with staff involvement and timelines. . The number of success criteria made it difficult for senior leaders to track the plan's progress and its effect on students' achievement.
- Although, this was the first time the school had been inspected its owners under a year ago had reviewed the school. This had highlighted what the school did well and what it should improve further. The school had made good progress in making the improvements that were required.




Partnerships with parents and the community	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's high priority to parental involvement was exemplified by the newly appointed principal inviting parents to meet him within a week of taking up post. Parents were engaged in many aspects of school life such as International Day through the GISPA group of committed parents. Parents' views were also taken into account in the planning of the new section of the school.</li> <li>The school used a wide variety of means to communicate with parents to help them play a knowledgeable part in their children's development at home. Parents stressed the success staff had in creating a community partnership with parents. This was based on open communication typified by the 'meet the executive leadership team' sessions when parents discussed current issues with senior leaders.</li> <li>Parents received regular detailed reports and attended meetings concerning their children's progress. Email contact with teachers gave the option for more frequent information or helped parents alert staff to any concerns they may have.</li> <li>Community links were developing at local, national and international levels. Hosting a round of the World Scholars' Cup was a forerunner to students' involvement abroad. Links and co-operation with other schools were increasing. Support for international charitable causes was developing. Local organisations such as radio stations had visited the school.</li> </ul>	

Governance	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The governance function was the responsibility of the ownership, and was effectively discharged by senior corporate staff. Governance sought the views of stakeholders and one attached governor held this particular brief. Governance knew the school well from a range of perspectives.</li> <li>Through regular visits, reports and data monitoring, governance kept a close eye on all aspects of school performance and particularly of students' academic performance. Governance also monitored the school's rapid growth in student numbers to ensure that staffing, resources and accommodation kept pace with increasing demand. Through a system of key performance indicators, governance held school leaders to account.</li> <li>Governance was an effective support for the school through its close connections with school leadership. Governance was involved in the planning and equipping of the building and in the appointment of staff. Ownership drew on its corporate resources to help the school develop policies to cover a range of activities.</li> </ul>	

Management, staffing, facilities and resources	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily routines had been put in place and developed as the school grew. They were well established and students observed them in a sensible and orderly manner. All staff were well informed of what was expected of them and deadlines were kept to. There were high expectations of good community behaviour.</li> <li>• The school was well staffed with teachers who had a good level of qualifications and professional backgrounds that suited them to teach the school's curriculum. They were well supported by comprehensive and up to date staff training. The support and orientation for staff new to the school enabled them to settle in quickly and make a positive contribution.</li> <li>• Students benefited from a very good range of facilities that supported the school's curriculum and additional activities well. Besides spacious classrooms, there were specialist facilities catering for example, for drama, music, art, design and technology. The attractive and functional KG area offered the opportunity for learning in different spaces. Compelling displays of students' work colourfully displayed around the school enlivened the learning environment.</li> <li>• The school has a ready supply of resources to support teaching and extend learning opportunities well. Besides a good range of classroom resources, the quality of specialist equipment such as for music was of particular note. Break-time play equipment for younger students was well organised and used. Students readily turned to information technology solutions in their work supported by tablets and laptops brought in from home.</li> </ul>	

## The views of the parents, teachers and students

Before the inspection, the views of the parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form inspection judgements. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys		
Responses received	Number	
<b>Parents*</b> 	2015-2016	248
	2014-2015	0
<b>Teachers</b> 	90	
<b>Students</b> 	46	

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

- Nearly all parents and staff were generally very satisfied with what the school provided.
- Students (a relatively small sample) were largely appreciative but somewhat more critical.
- On a few subjects, parents did not feel well enough informed. These included: students' progress in Arabic and Islamic education, their children's understanding of Islamic values and students' safety on school transport.
- While parents were well satisfied with their children's progress in English, mathematics and science, there were more concerns about their progress in Arabic and Islamic education.
- A large minority of students had concerns over their progress in Arabic and Islamic education but also in mathematics.
- Most parents and staff thought that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good. They felt that the school's curriculum prepared students well for the next steps in their lives through their good community involvement.
- About a fifth of those that responded to the survey did not know enough about SEND support nor about their children's understanding of Islamic values.
- There were few concerns over bullying or children's safety in school although about a third of students had concerns over behaviour.
- Parents were pleased with school leadership: a large minority of staff and students did not know or felt that leadership took account of their views.
- Parents felt well informed about most things but a large minority felt that they were not told enough how to help their children at home. Around a third of students felt that homework did not improve their learning.

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