

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Al Arqam Private School

Report published in April, 2013

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Al Arqam Private School

Location	Al Barsha
Type of school	Private
Website	<a href="http://www.Alarqam.ae">www.Alarqam.ae</a>
Telephone	04-340-0888
Address	Al Barsha 1
Principal	Abdulkader Ali Ateya
Curriculum	MOE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / KG 1-Grade 12
Attendance	Acceptable
Number of students on roll	1094
Largest nationality group of Students	Emiratis
Number of Emirati students	522 students (47%)
Date of the inspection	15th to 18th April 2013

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## The context of the school

Al Arqam Private School, located in Al Barsha, provides an education for boys and girls aged three to 18 years, from Kindergarten to Grade 12. There were 1,094 students on the roll at the time of the inspection. About 56 per cent of families are from the local area.

The school followed the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum and administered MoE tests to students. The school also took part in the National Assessment Programme (NAP) for MoE school students in Grades 3 to 9.

The school had four phases; Kindergarten, Cycle 1 (Grades 1 to 5), Cycle 2 (Grades 6 to 9) and Cycle 3 (Grades 10 to 12). Students were awarded an internal school certificate after completing Grade 12.

A total of 81 teachers were employed at the school. There were 21 new teachers. There were nine teaching assistants. Most teachers had a degree qualification and about 40 per cent had a teaching qualification. Two Heads of Departments were new to their positions. There was a new supervisor in the Kindergarten. Six supervisors had been appointed to the boys' section of the school and five supervisors to the girls' section. Supervisors had roles as classroom teachers and as monitors of teaching practice.

## Overall school performance 2012-2013

Unsatisfactory

### Key strengths

- Good attainment and progress of students in Islamic Education in Cycles 1, 2 and 3;
- Students' strong understanding of Islamic values and their awareness of the heritage and culture within the UAE.

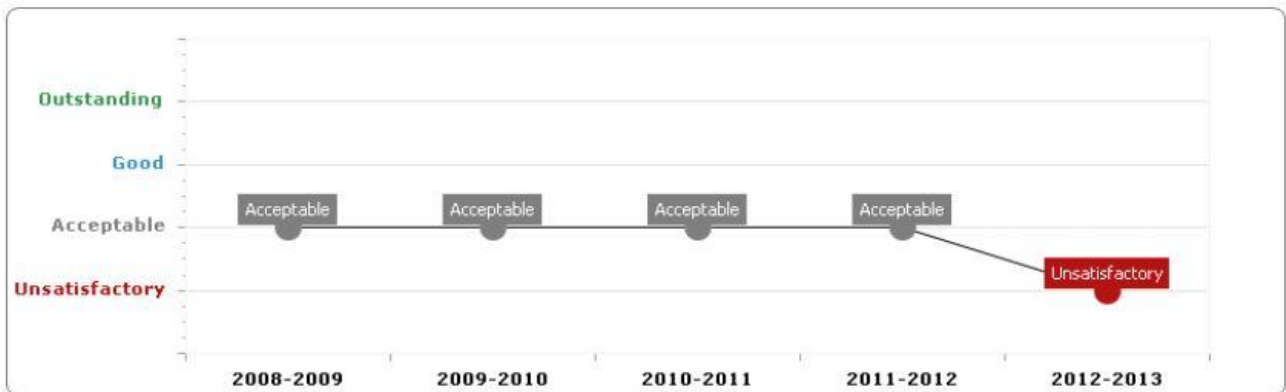
### Recommendations

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment across all phases to improve the attainment and progress made by the students;
- Ensure the well-being of all students through more effective and rigorous health and safety provision;
- Identify special needs students accurately and ensure that they are supported in lessons to make good progress;
- Involve the Board of Governors in making self-evaluation more accurate, so that improvement plans lead to better provision for students.

## Progress since the last inspection

- Teaching and support for students had improved in Cycle 2.
- The school had added a gymnasium, a science laboratory and six classrooms.
- Attainment and progress were unsatisfactory in several subjects in Kindergarten and Cycle 1.
- The qualities of teaching, learning and the curriculum had declined and were unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and Cycle 1.
- Health and safety procedures were unsatisfactory across all phases.
- The school leaders had not responded to previous inspection report to improve the school.

## Trend of overall performance



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

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
<b>Islamic Education</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
<b>English</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Mathematics</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Science</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attitudes and behaviour	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Teaching for effective learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

[Read paragraph](#)



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

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Curriculum quality	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Health and Safety	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

The students' attainment in the key subjects ranged from unsatisfactory to good. Attainment in Islamic Education was good in every phase except the Kindergarten, where it was acceptable. Students had strong recitation skills of the Holy Qur'an, knew the rules of recitation and understood Islamic concepts and their effects on their lives. In Arabic, most students across all phases had acceptable skills in listening, speaking and reading. Writing was the weakest skill. In Kindergarten and Cycle 1, all English language skills were unsatisfactory for children learning English as an additional language. In Cycles 2 and 3, students' listening and speaking skills were stronger than their reading and writing. Mathematics attainment was acceptable in Cycles 2 and 3 but not in the other phases. Arithmetic was the strongest skill throughout the school; applying mathematical understanding to real-life problems was weak. Science attainment in the Kindergarten and Cycle 1 was unsatisfactory. Children and students lacked the skills to investigate independently and develop their understanding. In Cycles 2 and 3 students' attainment in science was acceptable but their research, problem-solving and critical thinking skills were weak.

Students' progress was also mixed. In Islamic Education, the majority of students made better than expected progress in memorising of the Holy Qur'an and Hadeeth. They also made better than expected progress in their understanding of Seerah, Fiqh-laws, and Islamic principles and values. In Arabic, there was steady progress in listening and speaking skills, adequate progress in reading and slower progress in writing and in applying grammar rules. Progress in English, science and mathematics was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten and Cycle 1, but acceptable in Cycles 2 and 3. In English and mathematics, students' development was slowed when their teachers failed to assess what they already knew and, therefore, what they needed to know to make progress. In science, there was development of knowledge but little development of independent research and practical science skills. The progress of special needs' students was unsatisfactory in all key subjects. Teachers did not know these students' needs or how to meet them. Students were not supported appropriately in lessons and did not make progress.

[View judgements](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

The students' attitudes and behaviour were acceptable throughout the school. Relationships between students and adults were mostly positive. Management of students' conduct was satisfactory, but a minority of teachers lacked the skills of effectively managing more difficult behaviour. Most students had an acceptable sense of responsibility. The majority made healthy food choices. Students' attendance during the inspection was acceptable. A minority of students were not punctual at the beginning of the school day. Students' understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness was good across all phases. As a part of the school's vision of enhancing the Islamic values students prayed during the school day, which added value to their personal lives. Students were proud of their heritage. They were appreciative of the local culture as well as the advantages of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai society. Across all phases, students' community and environmental responsibility were acceptable. Most students demonstrated an acceptable work ethic. There was an acceptable awareness of environmental issues and an effort at water conservation, planting and recycling. This was more evident in the girls' section than the boys' section. Students did not always initiate these activities. Most students had a sense of responsibility and an understanding of the importance of helping others. However, opportunities for community involvement were limited and participation in activities outside the school had not been developed sufficiently.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten and Cycle 1 and acceptable in Cycles 2 and 3. Most teachers of young children lacked understanding of how to engage children in active learning. Children rarely made choices and decisions about their learning or worked together productively. Lessons were mostly from textbooks. Teachers dominated their interactions with students by talking for too long. Questions by teachers most often required simple recall of knowledge and brief responses. Teachers did not encourage students to think critically about their responses. Students rarely related learning to situations outside their classrooms or made connections between what they learned in different subjects. However, in a few good lessons, students had opportunities for stimulating discussions and activities requiring original and more complex thinking, for example, to solve problems. Teachers' planning did not take sufficient account of what individual students already knew and could do. Therefore, the tasks were too difficult for a few students and lacked challenge for a significant minority. This slowed the students' progress. Information and communications technology (ICT) was often not used by students as part of their learning.

The quality of students' learning was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten and Cycle 1 and acceptable in Cycles 2 and 3. Across the school most students were keen to learn. They were motivated to know more about people, the world and new ideas. Older students searched for information that interested them, developed their knowledge and brought ideas into classes. However, their curiosity was not often evident in lessons. From Kindergarten onwards children tended to take a passive role in classes. The teachers did not encourage students to make decisions or share their views. Younger students did not always collaborate effectively in groups. It was not routine for students to judge the quality of their work and take responsibility for it. Students were not given time to think, analyse and share their personal opinions and ideas.

The assessment of learning was unsatisfactory across all phases. Kindergarten teachers had limited understanding of how to observe and record the children's progress. Assessment was not used to plan the next steps in learning. National test results were collected, but they were not analysed or used to modify the curriculum or teaching. Teachers' assessment of their students' attainment was varied across different subjects and phases. Most teachers did not have a secure understanding of how to use assessment data to track students' progress. Only a few teachers gave meaningful oral or written assessment to their students. Students' self or peer review was not part of assessment practices. The school did not use external tests to measure the students' attainment against international standards.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum in the Kindergarten and Cycle 1 was unsatisfactory. It was acceptable in Cycles 2 and 3. Curriculum modifications were based on the MoE requirements only. Review of the curriculum was limited and did not include enrichment. It did not always meet the needs of students particularly in the Kindergarten and Cycle 1. Throughout the school, the curriculum was excessively based on the textbooks. It provided little choice in learning and limited students' investigation, enquiry and independent learning. However, these skills were more evident in Cycles 2 and 3. Worksheets were mainly used to consolidate knowledge rather than enrich learning. Extra and cross-curricular links were not added often enough to enhance learning. Remedial classes were provided, mainly prior to examinations to support the weaker students.

The curriculum lacked provision for the development of more able students, with activities mostly restricted to participation in competitions outside of lessons.

The curriculum was not always age appropriate, interesting or engaging. It was often repetitive and lacked appropriate levels of challenge. The expectations of students in most lessons were too low. This was mostly the case in the Kindergarten and Cycle 1.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for students' health and safety were unsatisfactory. Bus arrivals and departures were orderly, but attendance checks of students on buses were not always kept. There was poor maintenance of the premises. Some parts of the building and equipment were potentially hazardous or unhygienic for students and staff. The chemical storage area in the science laboratory was not locked. There were electricity boxes open in the school corridors. The internal door handle of one of the classrooms was missing and students were unable to leave. The school had not conducted a thorough inspection of the structure of the building after part of a ceiling had collapsed. Students arriving at the school early in the mornings were left unsupervised. The school clinic had maintained medical records and the clinic staff promoted healthy living. However, the school canteens did not promote healthy eating. There was insufficient training of the staff on child protection procedures.

The quality of support for students was acceptable across the school. Most staff members showed a satisfactory understanding of the personal and social needs of students. Relationships between teachers and students were mostly positive. Teachers' approaches to the management of behaviour was usually, but not always, constructive. Older students were confident to ask for help if needed. However, there was still only limited guidance and counselling about students' future careers, especially for the girls. Adequate systems were in place to monitor students' attendance and punctuality. Absences were recorded and parents were contacted to explain students' absences. However, a number of teachers were not always sure of the number of students that should be in their lessons.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school did not have appropriate systems to identify students with special educational needs. A recently appointed coordinator had begun arrangements for policies and procedures. Not all students with special

educational needs throughout the school had been accurately identified. Students with special needs were not suitably supported in lessons. Teachers did not use a range of teaching strategies and the curriculum was not appropriately modified to meet their needs. Individual education plans were not fully in place and students' progress was not accurately recorded or tracked. These students did not make the expected progress. Professional development for teachers of special needs students did not happen.

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of school leadership was unsatisfactory. There was unproductive communication between various levels of leadership. Senior leaders had provided a few improvements in the school. School leaders lacked a cohesive direction for school improvement. Roles were not always clearly defined for all levels of leadership. Staff members were not clear about how their roles related to the school's aims for improvement. The Heads of Phases and Departments contributed little to the school's decision making. A few leaders had made attempts to improve provision for students but these had had limited effects upon students' progress. There was inadequate professional development for those in leadership roles. The school surveyed students, parents and teachers, but there was little analysis of this consultation to inform decisions. There was limited capacity for school leaders to improve.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. Leaders did not have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There was a lack of performance management to inform the professional development of teachers. Almost all staff members were underdeveloped and professional development had not led to improvements in learning. School development plans did not focus on improving the quality of students' attainment. They did not clearly explain how successful outcomes and student progress would be achieved and measured. Minimal progress had been made in the implementing the recommendations from the previous inspection report.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. The majority of parents were supportive of the school. The main school leaders met with the Fathers' Association regularly. This group and the mothers' group were active in the school. Parents stated that the regular school reports gave them a clear picture of their children's attainment and progress. However, a significant minority of parents thought that communication with the school was not always effective. They did not think that issues were always resolved in a timely manner. There were a few links with the local community.

Governance was unsatisfactory. The Board of Governors did not have a clear understanding of its role in the school to support improvement. Governors did not hold the school accountable for improvements and the educational provision for students. The Board was not broadly representative of the community. It did not thoroughly seek the views of all stakeholders or respond sufficiently well to the key priorities of the school. It had not held the school sufficiently to account for its performance.

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Management, including staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. Most teachers had a university degree and about 40 per cent held a teaching qualification. Management of daily school routines ensured the regular operation of the school. Premises were adequate but not always well-maintained. There were additional classrooms, a new science laboratory and a new gymnasium. However, there was only one library for all sections of the school. A few classes in the Kindergarten had more than 25 children. The girls' section of the school had cramped classrooms and inadequate common space for the number of students. There was ICT for teachers' use, but only 56 computers for use by over one thousand students.

[View judgements](#)

## What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

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

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	94	18%
	Last year	87	14%
Teachers	72		84%
Students	162		82%

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

A minority of parents, most senior students and most teachers responded to the surveys. Most of the parents who responded thought their children made good progress in the key subjects. Nearly half of the students surveyed did not think they received sufficient support with their English language skills. The majority of parents thought their children enjoyed school, but nearly 40 per cent of senior students disagreed. Almost all parents and students thought that students had a good understanding of Islam. Only half of the parents agreed that their children were actively involved in community projects in Dubai. Only 60 per cent of parents believed their children received the support they needed to make good progress. Less than half of the senior students thought that teaching and learning were good. Only a minority of students said they received regular, helpful feedback on their learning. A majority of students did not agree that they could choose from a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. Teachers were positive in their views about the school on a wide range of aspects.



## What happens next?

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

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

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

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau**

**Knowledge and Human Development Authority**

## How to contact us

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

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