



National Agenda



Early years



Special educational  
needs and disabilities



Innovation

## Inspection Report 2015-2016

Al Mizhar American Academy School

Curriculum: US/MOE

Overall rating: Good

Read more about the school



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“Don't look  
behind to  
see who is  
following you,  
but look forward  
to be ahead”



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

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## School information

### General information



Location	Al Mizhar
Type of school	Private
Opening year of school	2005
Website	www.americanacademy.ae
Telephone	04-288-7250
Address	PO Box 78484, Mizhar 1
Principal	Bridget Justen
Language of instruction	English
Inspection dates	11 to 14 January 2016

### Students



Gender of students	Boys and girls (Pre-KG to KG2) Girls (Grade 1 to Grade 12)
Age range	3 to 18
Grades or year groups	Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12
Number of students on roll	644
Number of children in pre-kindergarten	17
Number of Emirati students	396
Number of students with SEND	35
Largest nationality group of students	Emirati

### Teachers / Support staff



Number of teachers	49
Largest nationality group of teachers	United States of America
Number of teaching assistants	18
Teacher-student ratio	1:25
Number of guidance counsellors	1
Teacher turnover	40%

### Curriculum



Educational permit / Licence	US
Main curriculum	US
External tests and examinations	AP, IBT, MAP, PSAT, SAT and TOEFL
Accreditation	NEASC, CIS
National Agenda benchmark tests	IBT

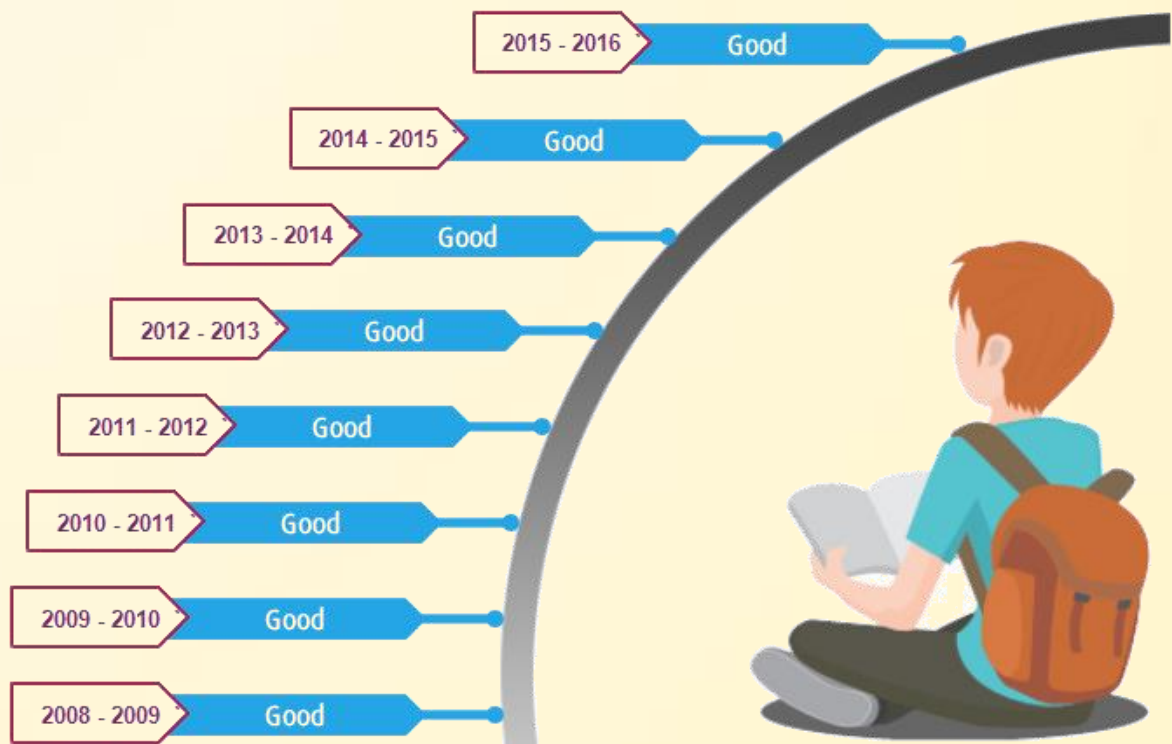


## Summary for parents and the community

**Al Mizhar American Academy School** was inspected by DSIB from 11 to 14 January 2016. The overall quality of education provided by the school was found to be **good**.

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, **Al Mizhar American Academy** provided a **good** quality of education for its students.

- Students' attainment and progress were mostly good across all phases but better in the Kindergarten (KG), where progress was very good in both English and science. Students' learning skills were good, but there were too few opportunities to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Students' personal and social development was very good in the Kindergarten and good in the other phases. Students demonstrated good understanding of Islamic values, although their knowledge of world cultures was not as strong. Their environmental awareness was good, but opportunities for participating in related projects were limited.
- The quality of teaching was good across all phases. Teachers' subject knowledge was secure and their planning was well considered, but strategies to meet the needs of different groups of students were not always evident. Assessment procedures in the Kindergarten were very good, and elsewhere good.
- The curriculum design and implementation were of good quality and the adaptation to meet the needs of students was good too. The school followed a Kansas-based curriculum model with due regard given to the Ministry of Education (MoE) regulations for teaching Arabic and Islamic Education. The provision of extra-curricular activities was limited.
- The provision for students' health and safety was very good and practices had further improved since the previous inspection. A child protection policy had been introduced and the staff was aware of the procedures that needed to be followed. The quality of support provided to students was good.
- The leadership of the school was good and the recently-appointed Principal demonstrated a strong capacity for further improvement. The school's self-evaluation had improved and governors were more aware of the leaders' plans for improving the school. Relationships with parents were good, as was the quality of staffing, facilities and resources.



### What did the school do well?

- Children's very good progress in English and science in the Kindergarten, as well as their very good personal development and the assessment of their learning.
- Students' good understanding of Islamic values, and their respect and appreciation for the heritage and culture of the UAE, especially in the middle phase, where these were very good.
- Students' good understanding of their social responsibility and their appreciation of environmental issues, especially in the Kindergarten, where these were very good.
- The very good provision for students' health, safety and welfare, including procedures for child protection and safeguarding.
- The good self-evaluation and action planning, as well as the school's positive response to the recommendations from the previous inspection report.



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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - ensuring that work is challenging and well matched to students' individual needs, especially for gifted and/or talented students;
  - developing students' critical thinking, problem solving and independent learning skills across all subjects;
  - ensuring consistently good use of assessment data to identify and address individual and group needs;
  - identifying and sharing the very best teaching practices across the school.
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all groups of students by providing further options for enterprise and creativity, as well as electives and extra-curricular activities.



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

- Students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) made good progress in most lessons.
- Parents received formal reports and information about their children's progress and achievements from the SEND staff.
- Parents appreciated the ongoing and continuous support provided for students with SEND by the school. Communication between the school and students' homes was good.
- Parents of students with SEND were actively engaged in the school and represented on the governing body.
- A good level of support and guidance for parents was provided by the SEND coordinators, teachers and the guidance counselor.

### 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. No attainment data was available to make a judgement on the progress towards meeting the National Agenda targets.
- The Principal had a clear vision for the National Agenda in the school and had ensured that parents, the staff and governors were aware of its importance. Students, especially the older ones, understood the aims and purposes of the National Agenda. They had all been involved in taking benchmarking tests earlier in the academic year. The broader aspects of the National Agenda were being explained to students through a developing social studies programmed.
- In all of the key subjects, curriculum adjustments had been made to develop the necessary skills, in light of the analysis of the TIMSS and PISA test results.
- In English, the teaching and curriculum design both had a significant focus on critical thinking. Students were encouraged to reflect on their work and develop their own thoughts, which they would then justify. In mathematics and science, the promotion and development of critical thinking was not as strong. In all areas there was a good emphasis on learning through real-life contexts.
- Students had adequate skills to make use of the learning technologies available to them. This was an area that was still to be fully embraced by all staff members and students. Activities in the Kindergarten provided examples of effective integration of learning technologies into children's everyday learning.

## 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 understood the importance of developing a culture of innovation across the school community. They demonstrated a commitment to enhancing the thinking skills of the potential future leaders of Dubai. Subject and phase leaders were responsible for encouraging teachers to promote and develop students' innovation skills. The school's spacious learning environment and new resources supported the development of creative teaching strategies. Recent changes to the curriculum and the weekly routines had increased opportunities for students to develop perseverance, take risks and develop their creativity.

Overall school performance

Good

1. Students' achievement

		KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Islamic education</b> 	Attainment	Not applicable	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	Not applicable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Arabic as a first language</b> 	Attainment	Not applicable	Good	Good	Acceptable
	Progress	Not applicable	Good	Good	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b> 	Attainment	Not applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
	Progress	Not applicable	Good	Good	Good ↑
<b>English</b> 	Attainment	Good ↑	Good	Good	Good
	Progress	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Good
<b>Mathematics</b> 	Attainment	Good ↑	Good	Acceptable	Good
	Progress	Good ↑	Good	Acceptable	Good
<b>Science</b> 	Attainment	Good ↑	Good	Good	Acceptable
	Progress	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Good

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Learning skills</b>	Good ↑	Good	Good	Good

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal development	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good	Good	Very good ↑	Good
Social responsibility and innovation skills	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Good

## 3. Teaching and assessment

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good ↑	Good	Good	Good
Assessment	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Good

## 4. Curriculum

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum design and implementation	Good ↑	Good	Good	Good
Curriculum adaptation	Good ↑	Good ↑	Good ↑	Good ↑

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Very good ↑
Care and support	Good	Good	Good	Good

## 6. Leadership and management

	All phases
The effectiveness of leadership	Good
School self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good ↑
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?

## 1. Students' achievement

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	Good ↑	Very good ↑
Mathematics	Good ↑	Good ↑
Science	Good ↑	Very good ↑

- The children's attainment in English against the school's Kindergarten curriculum standards was good. Lesson observations and the school's tracking data indicated that almost all groups of children made very good progress in the development of their speaking, early reading and writing skills, as compared to their low starting points when they entered the school. They were able to read with fluency and expression. Most children in KG2 were able to narrate and write about simple events and respond to questions from adults and their peers. They were writing short narrative sentences, speech bubbles and captions. Higher attaining children in KG2 were beginning to write in sentences using appropriate grammar and some descriptive words.
- A majority of children's attainment in mathematics was above the school's expected curriculum standards. Children in KG1 were able to identify and explain properties of shapes and apply this learning to real world experiences. They were able to add numbers, count securely, double and halve and use real world examples to subtract, using the vocabulary of subtraction and talking about the difference. By the time students were in KG2, they could effectively make up their own subtraction stories and shared them with their peers. Children were given numerous opportunities to consolidate their mathematical learning in well planned activities and in developmental play.
- In science, the majority of children attained above the curriculum expectations. They were able to sort and classify animals according to habitats, to predict changes in habitats and talk confidently about different land forms. They had opportunities in their independent learning activities to use and apply their knowledge to make real world connections and gain an understanding of different scientific concepts. Children made very good progress from their low starting points when they entered the school. In KG2 the children developed very good investigative and exploratory skills. They effectively used tablet computers and graphic organizers to represent the needs of different plants and animals.

### Elementary

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

- In Islamic Education, the majority of students had knowledge and understanding of the key concepts in Islam that were above the curriculum standards. They demonstrated good skills in the rules of recitation of the prescribed verses of the Holy Qur'an. In the lower grades, their understanding of the Pillars of Islam and the Pillars of Faith was better than expected and they had detailed knowledge of prescribed worship. Students had rich knowledge of Seerah and had developed strong understanding of the Prophet's (PBUH) childhood. They could describe events before and after the Revelation with his companions, comparing his enemies. The majority of students made good progress, but this was often dependent on the quality of teaching.
- In Arabic as a first language, the majority of students were attaining at levels above the curriculum expectations. They were able to understand appropriate Arabic vocabulary as a result of the free reading project which was used in the school. Students used independent reading to support and enrich their writing skills. However, their independent writing skills were not well developed. The majority of students made good progress and improved their reading comprehension skills by the end of this phase.
- In Arabic as an additional language, students' results were good and improving. The majority of students, particularly in the upper grades, had developed good listening and responding skills. Younger students pronounced words and phrases clearly and spoke accurately in the form of short dialogue. By the end of the phase, the majority could speak good standard Arabic and were able to engage in long, genuine conversations. Older students were confident readers, but had not developed higher-order comprehension skills. The majority of students had good handwriting and were able to write a couple of sentences, applying grammar rules correctly. The majority of students made good progress in most language skills. However, their extended writing was not well developed, particularly in the upper grades.
- The majority of students made better than expected progress in their English oral and written skills against internally set benchmark targets. Attainment levels, measured against internal and international standards, had increased over the previous three years and performance had improved significantly. Students had well developed listening skills and were able to listen and respond at better than expected standards. Students' speaking skills were evolving as they advanced through the school. Their writing skills developed through each school year and students made good progress in relation to their starting points.
- In mathematics, the majority of students in the elementary phase were working above the curriculum expectations and their attainment exceeded international norms. Grade 1 students were competent when working on the concept of doubling, plus 2. Grade 5 students were able to classify two dimensional shapes by their properties. All groups of students, including those with SEND, made progress above the expected rates. Their attainment levels, measured against international standards, had increased over the previous three years.

- In elementary science lessons and in their recent work, the majority of students demonstrated levels of knowledge and understanding above the curriculum standards. Grade 3 students could explore adaptation, considering what would happen to an elephant if it had no trunk. Grade 5 students researched complex matter such as colloids and plasma and conducted experiments changing matter with heat and chemical reactions. Students used technology to research and record their observations, which were often shared through social media. Progress in the elementary phase was good given the students' starting points.

### Middle

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


- In Islamic Education, the majority of students had strong knowledge of the key concepts in Islam. Almost all students had secure knowledge of the Prophet's (PBUH) life, companions and events. They showed respect to the Prophet (PBUH) as a model of mercy and as a teacher for all humanity. The majority of the students demonstrated good understanding of the rules of recitation of the prescribed Holy Qur'an.
- In Arabic as a first language, the listening skills of the majority of students were good and they responded fluently to teachers' questions, demonstrating their clear understanding. The majority of students exhibited good speaking skills that were above the expected standards, but they were not always prompted to give longer responses. Consequently only a minority of students answered more complex oral questions with confidence. Most students' writing was emerging and improving. Students could analyze complex stories, events and characters. The majority of students achieved above the curriculum expectations in the last examinations.
- In Arabic as an additional language, the majority of students showed well-developed listening and responding skills. Their speaking skills were developing as they were able to engage in conversations about familiar topics, but they were less confident in unfamiliar contexts. Their oral fluency was still underdeveloped. Most students exhibited acceptable reading skills but less developed comprehension, due to a lack of focus on developing higher-order comprehension skills. As expected, students could write paragraphs and dialogue of five to six sentences, but these included some mistakes in spelling, grammar and word choice. There was limited use of compound and complex sentences and a lack of opportunities for writing for different purposes. This hampered students' progress in developing their writing skills.
- The majority of groups of students made better than expected progress in their English oral and written skills against internally set benchmark targets. Their attainment levels, measured against internal and international standards, had increased over the past three years. Students had well-developed listening skills and were able to listen and respond at better than expected standards. Their speaking skills were evolving as they advanced through the school. Their writing skills developed through each successive school year. Overall, students made good progress in relation to their starting points.

- In mathematics, most students attained at levels in line with the curriculum expectations. The standards achieved, when compared with appropriate international benchmarks, were similarly in line. Students used mathematical terms appropriately when they were relating their knowledge to real-life contexts. Grade 8 students, for example, were competent when working with expressions and equations. The majority had achieved consistent levels of progress over the last three years. However, most students needed to improve their confidence and perseverance when working independently, rather than relying upon early assistance from teachers.
- In science, the majority of middle school students attained levels that were above the curriculum standards. Grade 7 students performed at a higher level according to the data provided. In Grade 6, all students had a good grasp of the scientific method, occasionally posing extending questions. By Grade 8, students were able to model elements of the digestive system, using sealable food bags and vinegar. Students made good progress in relation to their earlier starting points.

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

- The majority of the students' knowledge and understanding of the key Islamic aspects were good. In Grade 9, non-Arab students had very good responses to how Islam had spread so vastly. They understood Islamic values from the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's (PBUH) sayings. However, only a minority of students were able to apply these values meaningfully to their own lives. The majority of students made good progress overall. Students achieved above the curriculum expectations in the last examinations. They had knowledge of Islamic manners and linked them to their daily lives.
- In Arabic as a first language, the school's internal data did not accurately reflect the actual attainment and progress levels of students. Most students had secure listening and responding skills. Their speaking skills were only acceptable, as they frequently used colloquial Arabic. Students could read with confidence, but their answers to comprehension questions reflected their inability to analyze, infer, elaborate or draw conclusions. Most students were able to write extensively for a range of purposes, but they made quite a few mistakes in the application of grammar and language conventions. Most groups of students made the expected progress in lessons and over time. Better progress was noted in developing listening and reading skills than those of speaking and writing.
- In Arabic as an additional language, attainment data and lesson observations indicated that students' attainment was acceptable, with signs of improvement in their listening and reading skills. Most students could engage in short and simple conversations. Their Arabic pronunciation was mostly clear and accurate. Most students could decode with reasonable accuracy short, prescribed texts. Older students could write long dialogue and stories using picture prompts with acceptable levels of accuracy, content, structure and word choice. Due to the effective teaching, the majority of students made good progress in lessons and over time, especially in listening to and reading Arabic.

- In English, the majority of students made better than expected progress in oral and written skill acquisition on internally set targets. Their attainment levels, measured against internal and international standards, had increased significantly over the previous three years. Students had well-developed listening skills and were able to listen and respond at better than expected standards. Their speaking skills evolved as students advanced through the grades. Their writing skills improved through each school year. The majority of students made good progress throughout the phase.
- In mathematics, the attainment by the majority of high school students was above the expected curriculum standards. Students in Grade 9 were able to solve problems, and present and interpret results with accuracy. In Grade 12, students applied their learning well when determining suitable research topics for their statistics problems. They were able to explain the purposes and requirements of the data they were gathering. All groups of students, including those with SEND, made progress above the levels expected.
- In science, the attainment of most students was in line with the curriculum expectations. Students followed all stages of scientific enquiry when investigating processes such as osmosis and diffusion. They also learned the valuable lesson that it was acceptable to be wrong in scientific investigations. Some students were less enthused by scientific study, but even they had grasped the methods of enquiry and gained valuable research skills. Students used technology to research and record observations which were often shared through social media. The attainment data available, lesson observations and review of students' work indicated that they were making good progress through this phase of the school.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Learning skills	Good 	Good	Good	Good

- In the majority of lessons, students were active and enjoyed learning. For example, in English they were taking increasing responsibility for their learning, showing confidence in their expression, presentation and conversation. Some students tended to be more passive learners in high school science and mathematics lessons.
- When opportunities were available, students collaborated well with each other. For example, in a Kindergarten science lesson, children helped one another to use machine-readable Quick Response codes to take them to relevant websites when researching animals. Across all grades there was good collaboration in mathematics.
- Most students made clear connections between areas of learning and related them to their understanding of the world. In English, students habitually incorporated big ideas, real-life applications, cross-curricular connections and information and communication technology (ICT) into their daily academic routines. Learning in Kindergarten science was applied to the real world and older students made links between different subjects.
- Students were not sufficiently enterprising. They would find things out for themselves and used technologies to support their learning, but often only in response to their teachers' directions. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills were developing features of learning. Grade 5 science students used ICT to research types of matter, but needed help to be more discerning about individual websites.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal development	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Good

- Students across all four phases of the school were positive, articulate and confident. The majority worked well during lessons and responded positively to feedback from their teachers, although some students in the high school lacked independence and self-reliance.
- Students behaved well in almost all lessons in all phases. They frequently worked co-operatively in groups and were often seen to support one another's understanding during lessons, especially in the Kindergarten.
- Students' relationships with teachers and with visiting adults were polite and highly respectful. Students were observed working well together. However, some students expressed concerns about others' behavior and relationships with their peers.
- Students had good awareness of healthy living. However, some high school students acknowledged that they were reluctant to engage in activities that were part of such a lifestyle. Healthy and balanced meals were encouraged by the school, but older students did not always follow the school's policy regarding healthy eating. Many students participated in sports activities.
- Since the last inspection, children's attendance rate in the Kindergarten had improved significantly. Whilst there had also been some improvement in students' attendance in the elementary and middle schools, students' punctuality and attendance rates remained issues to be addressed, especially in the high school.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures	Good	Good	Very good ↑	Good

- Students across the school understood the relevance and impact of Islamic values upon daily life in the UAE. Non-Muslim students showed respect and appreciation towards Islam.
- Students had secure understanding of the traditions and culture of Dubai. They described some of the main sporting activities, local foods and traditional clothes of the UAE. In the middle school, students showed awareness and responsibility through their involvement in projects that promoted understanding of Emirati heritage and culture.
- Students had secure understanding and appreciation of their own cultures, especially in the middle phase. Their knowledge of other civilizations, folklores, traditions, arts and popular historical monuments was underdeveloped.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Social responsibility and innovation skills</b>	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Good

- Students enjoyed participating in initiatives and projects that helped their community. They raised funds to help the less fortunate and to support worthy causes such as breast cancer awareness. Kindergarten children simulated community member roles such as the 'electrician' to turn the lights out and the 'doctor,' who escorted an injured friend to the clinic. The 'Bucket Filler' initiative reflected children's high appreciation of those who supported them.
- Students enjoyed working together on schemes that required cooperation and collaboration. Children in the Kindergarten helped their teachers and peers without being prompted. Students in other phases had fewer opportunities to take responsibility or reflect on their understanding of simple economic concepts such as savings and expenditure. Older students believed that there was plenty of innovation in Dubai, but did not initiate any creative and innovative work in their school or community.
- Students showed good environmental understanding and awareness of relevant issues which the UAE and the world were facing, such as the lack of sustainability and increasing pollution levels. They understood concepts related to conservation and pollution; however, they were not aware of initiatives that could help counter environmental problems, or what they could do to participate in such initiatives.

### 3. Teaching and assessment

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Teaching for effective learning</b>	Good ↑	Good	Good	Good


- Teachers' subject knowledge and awareness of how students learn were good in all key subjects. For example, a Grade 4 mathematics teacher used a variety of media to develop the concept of place value. French and Arabic teachers used these languages almost exclusively. Teaching was generally at a pace that ensured students' engagement. Some teachers gave presentations with inappropriate fonts and text size, particularly for younger children.
- Lessons were planned carefully in almost all core subjects across all phases. Whilst most teaching provided appropriate levels of challenge, there was little differentiation within lesson objectives or resources to meet individual students' needs for support or challenge. However, teaching assistants were used well to provide additional support for the more challenged students.
- There were good relationships between adults and students, which provided a firm base for the good class management seen in most lessons. Students responded well to their teachers' skillful questioning. However, some students were excluded, as didactic teaching did not allow sufficient thinking time. In some classes, teachers' open-ended questions encouraged critical thinking.
- Teachers were increasingly aware of the different learning needs of their students. Adaptation of teaching methods was often done, particularly for students with SEND. In some lessons all students were asked to complete the same tasks, resulting in a lack of challenge for some groups, particularly the gifted and talented students.
- Critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation and independent learning skills were often referred to in lesson plans but not always well implemented. Teachers' questions encouraged critical thinking in English, and the application of knowledge to real-world situations in mathematics was developing. The use of ICT was encouraged in many subjects to develop research skills, including in Arabic and Islamic Education. Subsequent discussions in these two subjects limited opportunities for students to develop higher order thinking skills.

- In Arabic as first language, teachers modelled the correct use of standard Arabic. They planned activities that were well-thought out and provided meaningful and relevant learning experiences for almost all students. A variety of teaching resources supported students with differing learning styles. There were appropriate opportunities for independent learning, especially in the upper grades of each phase, but problem-solving opportunities and activities to promote innovation were lacking.
- In Arabic as an additional language, all lessons were well planned with clear learning outcomes and lesson outlines. Teachers prepared worksheets with various activities, which provided balanced opportunities for the development of all language skills. Teachers had good questioning skills, which engaged most students in active discussions. However, thinking time was not always enough for all students, due to whole-class questioning. The proactive role played by the teaching assistants helped to meet the learning needs of the more challenged students.





	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Assessment	Very good ↑	Good	Good	Good

- Across the school there was a coherent approach to the assessment of learning. There were thorough systems of assessment in the Kindergarten for all aspects of the curriculum. Assessments were aligned closely to the Common Core Standards for English and mathematics. The science curriculum was aligned to the Next Generation Common Standards. The curriculum for learning Arabic as an additional language was linked to the Modern Foreign Language standards.
- The Measures of Academic Progress system (MAP) had been used effectively by the school to compare students' progress with that of students following similar curricula internationally. The program was used from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in English, mathematics and science. In Arabic, national and international benchmark testing was not applied, but the school made use of the Arabic Proficiency Test.
- Assessment data were analyzed and used well to monitor students' progress throughout the academic year and over subsequent years. In Arabic, students' attainment and progress were measured but the progress by individual students was not well tracked. Teachers and teaching assistants in the Kindergarten carried out regular formative assessments during lessons and children in KG2 were able to peer assess against specific criteria.
- In most subjects, international comparison data were used to provide useful feedback to students and inform adjustments to the curriculum. Assessment information had encouraged further development of enquiry skills and teachers' questioning skills. It had also given emphasis to the development of critical thinking skills.
- Teachers knew their students well. For example, in Arabic, the written feedback provided by teachers illustrated their good knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses. Students across the school were encouraged to self and peer assess. Most teachers used oral assessment effectively in classes, which improved students' progress in lessons.

#### 4. Curriculum

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum design and implementation	Good 	Good	Good	Good

- The school had recently adopted the State of Kansas curriculum, which presented broad and balanced offerings. The curriculum had a clear rationale and was age-appropriate, relevant and effective in developing knowledge, skills and understanding. Although it was still evolving within the school, there was clear enthusiasm shown for having a curriculum that allowed both teachers and students to access clearly articulated standards which were highly integrated and skills based.
- The curriculum showed adequate progression in most key subjects. Across the different subjects and phases, the curriculum was modified to meet the needs of different groups of students. Students were adequately prepared for the next phases of their education, within school and beyond.
- Because of the small size of the school, there were relatively few elective subjects in the high school. Parents and students expressed concern over the provision for extra-curricular activities. Sport was well represented, but additional options for the arts, service and leadership were limited.
- There was an increasing range of innovative projects observed across the school. For example, the new science program provided a flexible, skills-based curriculum that was modified to meet most students' needs. However, there were insufficient extension activities for the most able science students. Open-ended assignments that allowed students to develop critical thinking skills were evident, although still developing in all phases.
- The curriculum was recently adopted after verification that it met students' needs and was a good fit for the school. Learning goals, standards referencing, essential questions, ICT integration and cross-cultural connections were included in lesson preparations. Further work was needed to make the written curriculum more accessible and to ensure that it was identical with the taught curriculum.
- The social studies curriculum effectively integrated the Kansas and UAE MoE curricula. The 'student learner profile' supported the roles and values of Islam in the UAE's society; for example, in Phase 1 the focus was for students to be caring towards others.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum adaptation	Good 	Good 	Good 	Good 

- The curriculum coordinator and teachers were taking steps to modify the Kansas curriculum to meet the needs of almost all students. The skills needed to meet the National Agenda targets were integrated into learning, and national statutory requirements were met through the school's timetables.
- Opportunities for, and the understanding of, enterprise and innovation were being developed with a range of innovative projects observed across the school. For example, a small select group participated in an international conference associated with the Mars mission in Singapore. Others were involved in local, national and international film, poetry and mathematics contests. Purposeful play in the new outdoor area and the 'Motor Lab' created new opportunities for the youngest students to learn through exploration.

- Students participated in a range of opportunities locally to expand their understanding of and connection to the UAE's values, culture and society. Many of these links were visually displayed throughout the school. For example, the 'Renaissance Festival' was produced independently by the students and attracted positive publicity in the local news.
- The school provided a comprehensive Arabic program for all its Arab and non-Arab children in the Kindergarten. The KG 1 children had three lessons a week, each of 45 minutes. Similarly, KG 2 children learned Arabic four times each week with a total of 180 minutes. The program focused on the development of all language skills, with learning activities for exploration and play.

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Very good ↑	Very good ↑

- The school had a clear and comprehensive child protection policy with detailed procedures, roles and responsibilities. These were well communicated to all stakeholders and effective implementation was ensured by regular training and frequent checks. Cyber safety was considered a priority and the school had administered several internet education sessions for the staff and students.
- Security systems provided by the school were of a high quality. Access to the school was well controlled and all gates were secured. The Health and Safety Committee met regularly. The facility manager, supported by the staff, supervised the bus and private drop-offs and pick-ups. Safety and security procedures such as emergency lockdown and school evacuation were well practiced.
- The school building was well maintained and safety in all facilities, including the sporting grounds and the swimming pool was ensured. Records of fire drills were kept and monitored for improving evacuation time. The school's nurse and visiting doctor kept comprehensive records of students' medical cases and injuries from incidents in a sophisticated software package which produced detailed reports.
- Several parts of the school had been renovated, particularly those which directly affected students' health and safety. More shaded areas and soft playgrounds were provided and slippery stairs had been changed. The school had a lift and ramps were added to ensure the easy entry of physically challenged students to all premises of the school. Cameras were installed on buses and across the school to ensure the safety of students and the staff. All students, including those with SEND, had equal access to all learning resources provided by the school.
- The health tracking system provided by the school was used effectively to track students' health conditions and to provide the necessary information to students, the staff and parents. A monthly newsletter was provided to students to promote healthy living. A comprehensive physical education program was in place to help students keep fit and active.

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Care and support	Good	Good	Good	Good

- The staff and students demonstrated caring, positive rapport and respect towards each other. There was an atmosphere of trust and courtesy throughout the school, and as a consequence behavior was good overall. Positive relationships were observed, contributing to a welcoming and nurturing atmosphere on campus. Students reported feeling comfortable and safe with their teachers.
- School attendance and punctuality rates had improved in response to the positive strategies implemented by the staff. These strategies included teachers and the head of school greeting students at the start of the day, increasing the sense of rigor in classes, communicating with parents and offering encouragement when needed.
- Almost all students with SEND were provided with effective instructional support and accommodations, based upon the assessment data gathered at the time of entry to the school. Gifted and talented students were identified in classes, but the work they were given was not sufficiently challenging.
- Most students with SEND were assessed after the entrance examinations in order to identify their needs and the additional support they needed. The staff worked closely to design daily class schedules for students with SEND that included prescribed support to maximize their development and learning.
- The counselor developed an effective program that provided students with guidance through a four-year process of exploration and preparation for college and careers. Social-emotional counseling was also provided by the counselor and was very beneficial to students who required support to manage their behavior. Additional personal and academic support was provided by the administrative, teaching, and support staffs.

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

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

Good ↑

- School leaders and the coordinating staff showed commitment to including and supporting students with SEND through their acceptance, accommodations in scheduling and the design of instruction by teachers.
- The school had a good process in place for identifying students in all phases who were in need of special education services. The SEND staff worked closely with teachers, the counselor and parents to ensure that barriers for students to access the curriculum were minimized.
- Parents expressed their appreciation for the care provided by administrators and teachers for their children. They were especially appreciative that their children had not been denied entrance because of their instructional, developmental, and/or behavioral issues.
- The SEND staff worked closely with classroom teachers to provide modifications to lessons and support for as needed. Most classroom teachers kept their students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in mind in their lesson design.
- Good progress was reported by classroom teachers and the SEND coordinator. The use of more regular diagnostic assessments was necessary to ensure that learning targets met students' needs and that the IEPs included ongoing reviews of students' progress.

## 6. Leadership and management

### The effectiveness of leadership

Good

- Senior leaders, and in particular the Principal, demonstrated competence in the effective setting of a clear strategic direction for the school. All leaders, including middle leaders, undertook their duties efficiently and competently. They demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusion.
- Senior leaders worked cooperatively and effectively to develop a culture of aspiration and success. Priorities for development were accurately identified and rigorously pursued, especially the development of the Kindergarten and the care, guidance and support of students. Middle leaders offered their competent support with confidence.
- Relationships and communications between staff members across the school were courteous, effective and professional. Staff members were encouraged to work co-operatively with a focus on consultation and involvement. Morale throughout the school was very positive.
- The recently appointed Principal, the senior leadership team and middle leaders demonstrated strong capacity for further improvement. They had good understanding of what needed to be done, and showed determination to deliver improved outcomes for students. Teachers, parents and students expressed confidence in the new leaders and the direction of the school.
- Leaders had worked hard to improve the provision in the Kindergarten and the quality of teaching in the school. The recruitment and retention of high quality leaders had been central to this improvement. Staff members welcomed external evaluation and the opportunities to learn how to improve further.

### School self-evaluation and improvement planning

Good ↑

- School leaders and the teaching staff had undertaken an honest and realistic appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Lesson observations and examination data were collated and used to support ongoing improvements. Leaders had good awareness of the strengths of the school and the priorities for improvement. Their judgements were accurate and the evidence they presented was detailed.
- Performance management systems were in place and lesson observations ensured that teachers received regular and supportive feedback. Lesson observations were used well to offer support to teachers on how to improve and were linked to personalized professional development.
- Long and short term action plans, as well as departmental action plans, were thorough and based on an informed analysis of what the school did well and what it needed to do to improve. Each action was assigned to a member of the staff with suitable time scales and resources identified. Progress towards meeting the targets was regularly measured so that ongoing and completed work were identified.
- There had been much progress in the implementation of the recommendations from the previous DSIB inspection report, especially the improvement of learning by Kindergarten children and the teaching of Arabic in the high school. Self-evaluation procedures were much improved since the last inspection.

## Partnerships with parents and the community

Good

- The school had recently established a parent association and was successful in engaging parents as partners in their children's educational journeys. Parental views were sought and considered in the decision making process. Most parents believed that the school listened to and acted upon their views.
- Communication between the school and homes was seen as an important element in the welfare of the students. Good communication was developed between the school and the parents, in particular when students with SEND were concerned.
- Effective reporting strategies were in place to help parents understand the progress their children were making. Parents praised the school for its work to strengthen home and school relations. They used communication tools such as electronic gradebooks and had regular meetings.
- The school had developed some partnerships and links with the community, but mutually beneficial aspects of such external partnerships were not fully developed. Students had the opportunity to access cross-school activities provided by the company which owned the school.

## Governance

Good ↑

- The governing body included representation from parents, teachers and students. The school benefited from corporate arrangements and systems, including staff training and management support. Members of the executive board and the governing body visited the school regularly and were suitably informed about the school through the Principal's monthly updates.
- The governing body played a significant role in supporting the school, holding it accountable for its performance and ensuring that the school met its commitments and obligations to stakeholders. Governors had good understanding of the school and its strengths and weaknesses. They could identify reasons for underperformance on the school's self-evaluation. Members of the governing body provided a range of expertise and knowledge to the school.
- The governing body actively supported and encouraged senior leaders in their pursuit of improvement and ensured that priorities were suitably funded and resourced. The board supported the school in addressing the recommendations of the last inspection report and exerted a positive influence on the direction and success of the school.




## Management, staffing, facilities and resources

Good

- Despite weathering considerable staff turnover in the recent past, the school's day-to-day management was well organized to optimize student learning. Those responsible for the management of the school took care to develop, update and maintain effective policies. Daily operations were routinely smooth with all main aspects of operations well organized.
- The school practiced effective and efficient hiring strategies that were carefully monitored to ensure that only people who met the school's expectations were hired. Staff members had suitable qualifications for their teaching assignments. The faculty numbers were appropriate for the size of the school, but the number of teaching assistants in the elementary school was low.
- The school offered well-designed, purpose-built facilities that provided a good platform for learning in both classrooms and specialist areas. The school had recently installed a number of exploration facilities for younger students, and these had created remarkable learning environments for the children to explore.
- The range, quality and quantity of teaching resources available showed careful consideration of the curriculum to optimize students' learning. Resources were plentiful, widely used, age appropriate and included modern technology, which was used with sophistication across the school.

## 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	128
	2014-2015	25
<b>Teachers</b> 	47	
<b>Students</b> 	85	

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

- Most senior students and parents were satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school.
- Most parents agreed that their children were making good progress in English, while a minority disagreed that there was good progress in learning Arabic and Islamic Education. Students agreed, and a minority reported they were not making good progress in mathematics either.
- Almost all parents agreed that their children enjoyed school and felt safe. Most students confirmed that they felt safe.
- The large majority of parents agreed that their teachers were well qualified, skilled and helped their children learn, but a minority did not.
- A minority of students did not believe that they were well prepared for their futures or had received adequate careers education advice.
- Most parents and students believed that the school was well led and many added positive comments about the recently appointed Principal.
- Minorities of students and teachers did not agree that the school listened and acted upon their advice.

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)