

INSPECTION REPORT

Apple International School

Report published in April, 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Apple International School

Location	Al Qusais
Type of school	Private
Website	www.apple.sch.ae
Telephone	04-2638989
Address	Qusais 1, Behind Emirates Driving Institute P.O. BOX 33963
Principal	Mrs. Hyacinth Pulickan
Curriculum	UK
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-13 / KG 1 to Grade 8
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2261
Largest nationality group of Students	Pakistan and Philippines
Number of Emirati students	23 (1 %)
Date of the inspection	17th March to 20th March 2014

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The context of the school

The Apple International School, located in Al Qusais, is a Foundation Stage to Grade 8 school catering for children and students aged from three to 13 years. At the time of the inspection there were 2261 students on roll an increase of 236 students (10%) from the previous year. Most of the students are from Pakistan and the Philippines with significant numbers of Indian, Arabic and Asian students. About 15 per cent of the students studied Arabic as a first language and there were 23 Emirati students in the school. The school had identified 63 students as having some form of special educational need.

The school had a Foundation Stage following the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum, a primary phase (Grades 1 to 6) and a secondary phase (Grades 7 to 8). The school followed the English National Curriculum in primary and secondary phases with increasing numbers of students taking the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) examinations in English, mathematics and science in Grades 3 to 8. At the time of the inspection, there were 107 teachers and 28 teaching assistants. Most teachers had a teaching qualification.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The positive impact which the leadership, vision and determination of the Principal and her senior staff was having a on school improvement;
- Students' good personal responsibility as well as their community involvement and environmental responsibility;
- The school's good provision to protect and support its students and the productive links it has with parents;
- The welcoming, caring and inclusive ethos of the school.

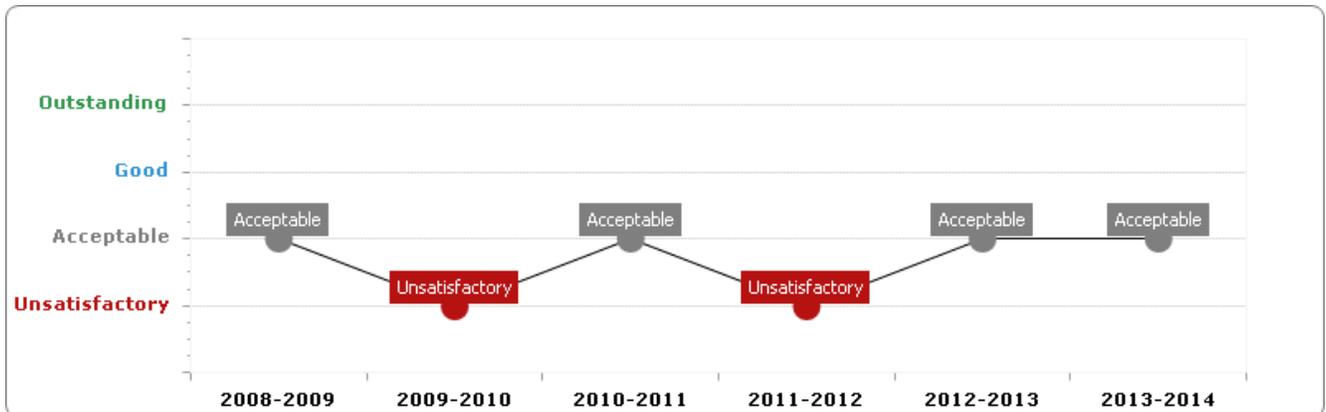
Recommendations

- Raise the attainment and progress of students' in Islamic Education and Arabic by improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through the sharing of best practice with other languages from across the school;
- Improve the quality of teaching to improve student progress by:
 - Ensuring greater independent study, research and greater independence in following lines of enquiry and interest;
 - Using the results of assessments to plan and modify lessons to meet the needs of all groups of students, including higher attaining students;
 - Developing the range of questioning to establish what students already know and extend their thinking;
 - Providing students with more focused oral and written feedback about the learning objectives so they understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve;
 - Improving the attendance of teachers;
- Increasing teachers' understanding of the assessment of Early Years Foundation Stage and National Curriculum programmes of study and ensuring that assessments are more accurate;
- Improve the curriculum to meet the needs of all students by developing more suitable approaches and resources for those who have special educational needs including higher attaining students.

Progress since the last inspection

- Attainment and progress in English in the secondary phase and science in the primary phase had improved;
- Although still acceptable, the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment had improved as a result of ongoing professional development;
- Students had been encouraged to take responsibility for the environment and undertake work in the community;
- The quality of health and safety is now good;
- Recruitment and retention strategies had resulted in improved stability of staffing across the school.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Personal responsibility	Good	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was acceptable in all phases and subjects apart from Arabic as an additional language where it was unsatisfactory in secondary. In Islamic Education, most students understood and could explain the five Pillars of Islam and six Pillars of Faith. Their recitation skills and understanding of the Quran verses remained weak. In Arabic as a first language, listening and speaking were the strongest skills. In Arabic as an additional language, most students listened and responded appropriately to familiar greetings. Reading in the primary phase was adequate but was too challenging for too many students in the secondary phase. Independent writing skills were weak in both phases. In English from the Foundation Stage upwards, students developed a clear and legible handwriting style. Most students demonstrated effective listening skills. Younger students could recount the sequencing of a traditional story whilst older students could recall factual details from an extract. In mathematics, in the Foundation Stage, children were able to count and match objects. By the end of the primary phase, they were secure in procedural mathematics and mental arithmetic. Older students showed more confidence and competence in their mathematical aptitude although reasoning skills were under developed. In science, Foundation Stage children had an acceptable understanding of the world and could recognise a range of animals and different habitats. In the primary phase, investigative work was well developed while secondary students demonstrated acceptable practical skills and understanding.

Progress was acceptable across all subjects, except in secondary Arabic as an additional language where it was unsatisfactory and primary science and secondary English where it was good. In Islamic Education, most students made steady progress in understanding Islamic morals and values. Students' progress in developing understanding of the manners and behaviour expected of a good Muslim in real life contexts, as well as in their recitation skills was generally slow. In Arabic as a first language, progress was strong in listening and responding. It was acceptable in reading and speaking using modern standard Arabic. In Arabic as an additional language, primary students made steady progress in the pronunciation of familiar words and developed a reasonable range of vocabulary. However, students' progress in the secondary phase was very limited particularly in speaking and writing. Progress in English across the school was variable. It was stronger in Grades 7 and 8 where better teaching and learning accelerated the progress of older students. Progress in mathematics was acceptable. Students' familiarity with real life applications as well as problem solving supported their progress. Foundation Stage children developed an acceptable knowledge of a narrow range of scientific concepts. Their well-developed investigative skills ensured good progress in the primary phase but this was not sufficiently developed in the secondary phase.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The development of learning skills across the school was acceptable. Students were enthusiastic and keen to learn, but this was not utilised well in lessons. They had little ownership or choice of what and how they learned or the development of their skills. There were too few opportunities for developing independent learning skills. They worked well collaboratively when given the opportunity and could explain what they were doing. Most did not have sufficient clarity due to imprecise lesson objects. There were improved links with real life problems in most subjects and some good examples of building on prior learning in and links with other subjects in mathematics. Across the school, there were few opportunities for students to develop their technological and critical thinking skills.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Personal responsibility was good across all phases. Students welcomed visitors warmly and relationships between students and their teachers were respectful and generally positive. In the Foundation Stage, children could state why some foods were healthy while older students provided examples of how the school promoted healthy living including the work of the health and safety committee. Punctuality was improving and attendance rates were good as a result of recently implemented systems.

Most students had an acceptable level of understanding of how Islamic values impacted on their life in Dubai. In the Foundation Stage, children learnt about the climate of the UAE while older students demonstrated a good knowledge of Emirati traditions and culture as a result of their social studies programme. Students' awareness of other cultures from around the world was under developed.

Community and environmental responsibility was good across all phases. Students talked enthusiastically about their recycling campaigns and demonstrated a good knowledge of how they could make a positive impact upon the environment. Older students appreciated the opportunity to be part of the School Council and represent the views of their peers. All students during the school year visited the local community to raise their awareness of the local environment. The school had established worthwhile links with a local special school.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

The quality of teaching across the school was acceptable. Teachers' subject knowledge was sufficient but strongest in the secondary phase. There were some variations in teachers' understanding of how to teach very young children. Lesson planning was consistent across phases and subjects. In better lessons, plans contained greater detail. Learning objectives were clearer, which allowed them to be used to assess progress. In Arabic and Islamic Education, expectations were not sufficiently high. Teaching generally restricted student participation and limited independent learning and the development of enquiry skills. However this was not the case during free play in the Foundation Stage. Most teachers' questioning was restrictive and designed to assess student recall of knowledge. There was insufficient open-ended questioning used to gauge students' prior knowledge or to promote critical thinking. Teaching was not always effective in meeting the needs of all groups of students.

Assessment was acceptable across the school. Assessment systems were strong in Foundation Stage where data was gathered and analysed for different groups of children. In the primary and secondary phases, internal testing at the beginning of each year was used to identify strengths and weaknesses. These were compared with summative tests, at the end of the year, to give indicators of progress. A minority of Grade 3 to 8 students took external, internationally benchmarked assessments. National Curriculum levels had recently been introduced but the understanding of level descriptors was at an early stage. Consequently tracking data for students lacked accuracy and did not support the teachers in their planning and modification of lessons. Teacher's written and oral feedback did not specify strengths and areas for development. Peer and self-assessment was at an early stage of development.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was acceptable throughout the school. A review had occurred and as a result the school had adopted the latest version of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the Cambridge Primary Programme and Key Stage 3 National Curricula. The curriculum covered most of the expected subjects with options to study French or Urdu from Grade 2 and separate sciences in Grades 7 and 8. National Curriculum levels had recently been adopted in core subjects and there were plans to extend this further. Levelling was in its early stages of development and not all teachers were familiar with appropriate levels. The curriculum was enriched by educational visits, along with a number of visiting speakers and regular sporting opportunities. In addition, activity clubs were held on two days each week for all students in the primary and secondary phases, although the quality of these was variable.

The design of the curriculum was acceptable. Most teachers provided different materials for the range of abilities but these were not always sufficiently matched to student' needs. Provision for those with specific learning difficulties was appropriate although some staff were not clear how to support students' individual needs. Peer buddies were widely used and students benefited from this additional support. Provision for higher attaining students was not well planned for. There was insufficient challenge to extend knowledge and develop higher order thinking skills. Although the Foundation Stage curriculum followed learning goals, it provided an uneven balance of teacher direction and child initiated learning with too few opportunities for learning through play.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The arrangements for health and safety were good across all phases. The school had appropriate policies and procedures that were well established and understood by all staff. The cleanliness and the high quality of hygiene of all parts of the school was notable. The safety of the school's premises were monitored and problems quickly addressed. The school clinic operated efficiently and effectively. Staff and students were aware of child protection policies and procedures.

The quality of support was good. Relationships throughout the school between students and staff were very positive. Teachers knew their students well and supported their social and emotional needs effectively. Most kept good control and had clear expectations of behaviour. The school's priority to improve punctuality and attendance further had had a noticeable, positive impact. The school admitted students with special educational needs and had appropriate systems to identify their needs. Appropriate provision in class allowed these students to make steady progress. Senior staff and the school's counsellor gave guidance to senior students before they moved onto their next level of education and provided opportunities to access a range of subject and career advice.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership and management was acceptable. The Principal and her senior team demonstrated determination and commitment to improving the school and were supported by senior staff, middle leaders and the governing board. The leadership team were suitably focused on school development priorities including the induction and ongoing professional development of recently appointed and relatively new staff. However, progress in securing improvement had been slow. Leaders had strong expertise in narrow fields but were not confident across all aspects of the school. Relationships between leaders and staff were

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professional and supportive. Consultation with parents, students and other stakeholders was a strength. Leaders had been successful in developing the quality of teaching against a backdrop of high but reducing staff turnover.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The Principal and her senior staff had a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school which was increasingly shared by middle leaders. Self-evaluation was accurate but more descriptive than evaluative. School improvement plans were appropriate and suitably focused, although long term planning lacked detail. Leaders made good use of lesson observations to identify strengths and weaknesses but targets were not sufficiently linked to professional development. As a result of development planning and subsequent actions some improvements had been made. Students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic remained as an area for improvement although progress in English in the secondary phase and science in the primary phase were better. Health and safety was now good and recruitment and retention improving.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. There were many opportunities for parents to support their child's education through information posted on the parents' portal, regular student reporting and parent/teacher meetings. Parents praised the 'open door' approach of most teachers and their prompt response to issues raised. School improvement planning was shared with parent representatives through the Parents Forum but further dissemination was limited. Links with the community included fund raising and competitions.

Governance was acceptable. Parents and teachers were represented on the board and the views of stakeholders sought and acted upon. However, their impact on school improvement was insufficient, particularly in Arabic and Islamic Education. Governors were regular visitors to the school and were well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. On a day to day basis the school ran efficiently but there were a number of staff, particularly in the primary phase, who did not possess a suitable teaching qualification. Premises were adequate. The science laboratory had been enlarged but was still too small to house big classes and all equipment. Facilities for outdoor and indoor play in the Foundation Stage were adequate. Facilities for the provision of sport and performance elsewhere were less than satisfactory. All classrooms were equipped with whiteboards and projectors.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

There were twenty three Emirati students in the school. Their attainment and progress was generally in line with that of their peers across the key subjects and across the three phases. It was acceptable in Islamic Education, Arabic, English, mathematics and science. Students' attitudes and behaviour were good throughout the school. Their attendance was just acceptable. They demonstrated good self-resilience and showed respect to other students, staff and visitors. They were engaged in cultural events and school daily life as well as with their peers. Emirati parents were involved in the life of the school.

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

The school provided an acceptable quality of support to students with special educational needs in English, mathematics and science but in Islamic Education and Arabic it was unsatisfactory. There were appropriate processes to identify needs on enrolment and in the school. Parents were fully involved in discussing and agreeing their child's support. They received helpful advice from the school on how to support their child at home and when additional, external assessment was needed. Where appropriate, staff drew up adequate individualised educational programmes (IEP's). These provided detailed individual targets to be achieved and involved class teachers, specialist support staff and parents.

The progress of students was tracked carefully to evaluate attainment and progress. The Counsellor and other learning support specialist staff provided good help to individuals and groups of students both in class and in small groups during withdrawal. As a result, students made steady progress. Most class teachers were supportive of students in their classwork but they had made limited adaptations to activities and resources to meet students' range of needs and styles of learning. Student buddies helped their classmates with their subject work which gave additional opportunities to cooperate and improve their understanding. Ongoing training was supporting staff understanding of students' needs.

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

In Arabic as a first language, the teaching quality was inconsistent across the phases. Most teachers had secure subject knowledge but variable understanding of how students learned the language. Lesson objectives were not always appropriate and only a minority of teachers used the available resources effectively to enhance students' learning. Teaching relied heavily on teacher-dominated activities with

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excessive teacher talk. In general, low teacher expectations and a lack of challenge for students were the main weaknesses. Teaching was mostly driven by the content of the textbook and did not cater for the linguistic needs of students. Opportunities to learn independently were not frequent enough and students had limited opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills.

The school was compliant with the Ministry of Education requirements for the teaching of the subject. Overall, the school curriculum strictly followed the MoE textbooks and there were a few enrichment activities. There were limited opportunities for students to access all language skills so that opportunities to develop speaking and writing skills were seriously restricted.

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	472	28%
	Last year	306	29%
Teachers	87		88%
Students	There are no upper secondary-aged students in the school		

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

A minority of the parents responded to the survey which was similar to the proportion in the previous year. Most teachers also responded to their survey. No students met the eligibility criteria for the student survey. Parents were positive about the school and most felt that it provided a good quality of education. They felt their child was making good progress in English and mathematics but did not feel that technology was well developed. Almost all parents felt that their child enjoyed life at the school and that the school looked after them and kept them safe. Most felt that the school was well led but a few said that school leaders did not listen to their opinions. Almost all teachers felt that the school provided a good quality of education, dealt well with bullying and prepared students for their next stage in learning. They agreed that the school was well led and supported their ongoing professional development.

What happens next?

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

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

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

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

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

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