

INSPECTION REPORT

National Charity School

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT National Charity School

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.charityschools.com
Telephone	04-2821942
Address	PO Box 2620, Al Garhoud, Dubai
Principal	Dr. Mohammed Robin Hafez Edris
Curriculum	MOE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	5-17 / Grade 1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	5,636
Number of Emirati students	34 (Less than 1%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 13th February to Thursday 23rd February 2012

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The context of the school

The National Charity School is situated in Al Garhoud. The school was opened in 1983 and has been on the present site since 1985. At the time of the inspection, the school had a total of 5,636 students, aged from 5 to 17 years. 2,978 students attended the school in the morning and 2,658 in the evening. Students reflected 32 different nationalities; very few were Emirati.

The school followed the Ministry of Education (MOE) curriculum. Students sat internal school attainment tests and, by Grade 11, all boys sat science stream subjects with girl students having the option to study subjects in either a science or arts stream leading to external Ministry of Education (MOE) tests. The Executive Director was also responsible for three other National Charity Schools outside of Dubai. He was supported by a senior management team, which included four Principal teachers, each of whom had considerable autonomy for running areas of the school.

In addition, subject leaders worked across the cycles and also had responsibility for their subjects in the other National Charity Schools. There were 133 full-time teachers in the morning. A similar number of part-time teachers worked in the evening with a majority being teachers who also worked in the morning session. All had appropriate teaching qualifications. Students were arranged into three cycles in the morning and also in the shorter evening session. The school had not evaluated the impact on the pace of learning of the evening students as a result of the reduction in their school time. The Executive Director was in his seventh year in post at the time of the inspection.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The National Charity School provided an acceptable quality of education. The Executive Director, principals and subject leaders showed varying but overall effective leadership in ensuring that the school maintained and improved areas of its work. Staff showed caring relationships towards students and most students showed very positive attitudes to learning and were very well behaved. Approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning were weak and were a barrier to the school ensuring continuous improvement.

The quality of teaching and learning was acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2 across both the morning and evening sessions but this had improved and was now good in Cycle 3. The school had made limited progress in meeting the recommendations of the previous inspection report. The range of teaching

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strategies remained narrow in Cycles 1 and 2 but most teachers now used questioning more effectively to involve student in their learning and encouraged them to demonstrate what they had learned to their peers. However, attainment in English and mathematics in Cycles 1 and 2 had not improved. Some improvements had been made to students' attainment and progress in science. Their progress had declined in both English at Cycle 2 and in science at Cycle 1. Teachers continued to make insufficient use of assessment to inform teaching and students' higher order and critical thinking skills remained underdeveloped. Partnership with parents and the wider community had improved and was now acceptable. Effective governance had still to be established. While some resources had been improved they remained insufficiently developed to enable key activities to be consistently integrated into the learning process.

Key strengths

- The continued good levels of the students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic across the three cycles of the school and in English, mathematics and science in Cycle 3;
- The improvements in students' attainment and progress in Cycle 2 in science in the morning and students' progress in science in Cycle 3 in both the morning and afternoon;
- The positive attitudes to learning of most students;
- The improvements in teaching and learning in Cycle 3 across the school;
- The improvements in communication with parents and the involvement of parents and the wider community in the life of the school.

Recommendations

- Address the decline in the students' progress in Cycle 2 English and Cycle 1 science in the morning session and improve teachers' planning and delivery of teaching approaches across the school in order to fully meet all students' learning needs;
- Ensure appropriate supervision of students at the drop-off and pick-up time for buses and from private cars to ensure students' safety;
- Improve procedures to diagnose the specific needs of students and provide better provision for higher ability students, those who are gifted and students with barriers to learning;
- Improve self-evaluation through:
 - Senior leaders working more collaboratively to evaluate their impact on school improvement;
 - Defining and evaluating more rigorously the impact of school planning objectives on students' learning;
 - Identifying more effectively staff responsibilities and timescales in taking forward agreed school priorities, as well as identifying how success can be measured;
 - Ensuring greater focus in classroom observations on students' learning and use of teachers' assessments of students' progress to inform teaching;
- Improve governance and, in particular:
 - Implement the school's plan to establish parental representation to inform and support the Governing Body;
 - Ensure that the Governing Body communicates its work to parents, regularly consults with the wider parental group and holds the school more accountable for its actions;
- Improve the provision of resources to support learning and teaching.

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

	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Islamic Education						
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as a first language						
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Arabic as an additional language						
Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
English						
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Mathematics						
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Science						
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

Students' attainment was good in Islamic Education and Arabic across all cycles of the school. It was acceptable in English and mathematics in Cycles 1 and 2. In science, students' attainment was also acceptable for morning students in Cycle 1 and for students in Cycles 1 and 2 in the evening. Cycle 2 students' attainment in the morning was good in science. Attainment in English, mathematics and science in Cycle 3 was good across the school. Overall, girls' attainment was better than that of the boys across the subjects and was higher in the morning session than in the evening. Almost all students had a good understanding of Islam. In Arabic and English, students' listening, responding and speaking skills were most developed. In English, Cycle 1 and 2 students' reading and writing skills were least developed. At the higher end of Cycle 2 and throughout Cycle 3 students demonstrated a good understanding of science topics and applied mathematical knowledge well.

Progress was good in Islamic Education and Arabic across all cycles of the school. Students were making acceptable progress in English and mathematics in Cycles 1 and 2 in both the morning and evenings sessions. Cycle 1 students' progress had declined and was acceptable in science in the morning. It was also acceptable in both Cycle 1 and 2 in the evening. Students' progress in science in Cycles 2 in the morning and at Cycle 3 across the school had improved and was now good. It remained good in Cycle 3 in English and mathematics in both the morning and evening sessions. Students with special educational needs were not making as much progress as their peers.

Overall, Emirati students across all subject areas achieved levels similar to students of comparable abilities. Their progress was also in line with that of students with similar abilities.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good across the school, except in Cycle 2 in the morning session where they were acceptable. Almost all students were enthusiastic learners and had good relationships with their teachers. However, a few Cycle 2 students showed disrespect for some of their teachers. Most understood the need to keep healthy and showed a commitment to healthy eating and importance of sports. Attendance was good but lateness remained an issue particularly at Cycle 2. Islamic and cultural understanding was good. Most students understood Islam's values and their impact on contemporary society in Dubai and the wider world. They explained how Dubai helped poorer countries. Most students had a good understanding of the traditions and culture of Dubai and could describe some of its main sporting activities, local food, and traditional clothes. Most valued and respected the multi-cultural nature of Dubai and regarded this as a strength. Students' civic, economic and environmental understanding was acceptable. Most students had a good knowledge of how Dubai had developed. They could describe some of the important aspects of Dubai's economy and understood the importance of business, tourism, and industry on the economy of Dubai. The School Council provided students with an acceptable opportunity to develop civic responsibility and leadership. Environmental understanding was in line with expectations but students had a limited understanding of how they could contribute to its improvement.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2 and was good in Cycle 3. Teaching was better in Cycle 2 in the morning session and in Islamic Education and Arabic across the school. Lessons were generally well planned but learning objectives were not shared consistently. Most teachers knew their subjects well, but the majority did not use a wide enough range of strategies to address the varied needs of students. Pace was good in a majority of the lessons. Often lessons were too text-book led and other resources were very limited. Teachers' talk in Cycles 1 and 2 sometimes dominated lessons and students were passive, whereas in Cycle 3 there was greater interaction, which led to meaningful and relevant learning.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2 and good in Cycle 3 in both the morning and afternoon sessions. The quality of students' learning was better in Cycles 2 and 3 in the morning sessions and in Islamic Education and Arabic. Almost all students had a positive attitude to learning and some older students took responsibility for their learning. Group work was a feature of some classes. However, students of similar abilities were seldom grouped together. Consequently, opportunities for students to extend each other were missed. In many lessons, the majority of students could relate their class work to previous learning, within and across subjects. Students in Grades 1 to 4 related their learning to the real world through a programme of visits outside school. Older students had opportunities to develop their independent learning skills through projects but were constrained by the limited access to the internet. In Cycle 3, critical thinking skills, facilitated by good interaction between students and the teacher, were a developing feature of learning.

Assessment of learning was acceptable throughout the school. Large amounts of assessment data were collected regularly in all cycles. Increasingly, teachers used this data to identify performance levels of their students or to categorise the ability ranges in each class. However, they did not modify their planning or

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teaching as a result to better support students' learning. Tracking of students' progress over time or analysis of trends of attainment across classes, gender or year groups was under developed. Assessment of students' learning during lessons was done well by a minority of teachers, often through checking that learning had been successful through effective open questioning. In all cycles, teachers marked most work regularly but the lack of written constructive comments did not provide students with sufficient information on how they might improve.

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

	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum was acceptable in all cycles. Breadth, balance, progression and review were based on MoE requirements ensuring appropriate transitions for students. However, the text-based curriculum and an over-reliance on routine tasks did not meet all learner needs and often lacked challenge. Cycle 3 boys had insufficient choice with only a science stream offered as an option compared to girls' choices of arts and science. Improvements to the curriculum included extra classes aimed at supporting those identified as being high attaining students or in need of further support. However, these classes were not sufficiently regular and had not been evaluated for their impact. A programme of external trips had been established but had yet to involve most students. A few parents and some external agencies had recently visited the school to enrich students' understanding of their social responsibilities and health issues. However, there were few extra-curricular and enrichment activities, cross-curricular links or additional resources to support all levels of learning.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Cycle 1 - Morning	Cycle 2 - Morning	Cycle 3 - Morning	Cycle 1 - Evening	Cycle 2 - Evening	Cycle 3 - Evening
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The provision for students' health and safety was acceptable. Buses were well-maintained and equipped and students were accompanied by supervisors. However, drop-off and pick-up procedures for buses and private cars were not consistently safe and required review. School entrances were supervised throughout the day. Three recently enhanced medical clinics were well staffed. Systems for recording the health of students were detailed and thorough and all medication was securely stored. Premises were clean and reasonably well maintained. There was no physical disability access to the upper floor. Fire drills were regular and effective. Students were given good advice on health education by clinic staff and visiting speakers and three school social workers monitored child protection arrangements and referrals. A few students were not collected by parents in good time at the close of the morning and evening sessions.

The quality of support was acceptable. Most teachers knew their students well and cared for their well-being. The few instances of poor behaviour were dealt with effectively. The social workers provided pastoral care through their work with parents and students. Senior students benefited from good links with further education colleges and universities. Teachers and parents of students with learning difficulties made referrals to the social workers. However, few examples of diagnosis and specific learning support were in evidence. While the school had good systems for identifying the cause of absence, procedures for recording students who were late were not applied consistently and there was no tracking system to support improvements.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The leadership of the school was acceptable. The Executive Director and Principals had effectively promoted an inclusive and caring ethos. However, insufficient clarity of vision and direction from the Executive Director was a barrier to consistent practice across the school. Principals and subject leaders met with the Executive Director to discuss progress in taking forward their roles and responsibilities. A recent consultation with students had helped the school identify school priorities but had yet to lead to measurable improvements. Teachers were committed to the school but were not sufficiently involved in curriculum pilot activities or school working groups. The Executive Director had not ensured that agreed priorities or pace of change were being evaluated rigorously enough. The skills of senior and middle managers needed development to build their capacity for further improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. Leaders at all levels did not measure sufficiently the impact of planned actions or identify clearly enough timelines, roles, responsibilities and criteria against which success could be measured. A few improvements had taken place but they were not consistent across the various cycles of the school. Classroom observations were regular but did not identify weaknesses and strengths clearly enough leading to improvements in teaching, learning and assessment.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Communication with parents had improved and included more frequent parent-teacher meetings, regular reports on students' progress and informative daily reports through a student diary system. However, parents did not receive sufficient strategies to help support their children's learning. Both the Fathers' and Mothers' committees had increased their involvement in supporting the school. As a result a few volunteers contributed very positively to students' pastoral care and aspects of students learning. Links with the community had also improved.

Governance was unsatisfactory. The governors supported the school and were committed to inclusive education. The work of the Governing Body was not communicated effectively to parents and the wider

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community. Despite very recent discussions with some parents there was no firm plan to establish an advisory body to ensure that the views of parents were gathered to support school improvement or to support the Governing Body in holding the school accountable for its actions.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources were unsatisfactory. There were insufficient information and communications technology (ICT), furniture and other teaching resources, despite recent improvements. Students' reading books in English and practical learning resources in mathematics and science were particularly insufficient in quality and range. Across the school teachers made many of their own teaching resources. Some class sizes had been reduced but classrooms remained crowded, limiting the range of teaching approaches. Teachers benefited from some professional development but this was infrequent and not sufficiently targeted towards supporting students' learning or teaching and assessment skills. Insufficient use was made of display in corridors and teaching areas.

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	175	2%
	Last year	316	5%
Teachers	11		1%
Students	195		1%

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

Most parents and a majority of students and the very small number of teachers who responded to the questionnaire were pleased with the school and thought that it was well led. However, only a majority of parents and students were positive about most aspects of education in the school. Around half of the students and less than half of the parents thought that they were involved sufficiently in the life of the school or in making decisions about its future. Around half of the students and less than half of their parents thought that student behaviour was good. A similar number of students thought that they were treated fairly at school. Less than half of the students were happy with subject option choices or thought that they were involved sufficiently with the wider community. Just over half of the students thought that they had sufficient information on how they might improve in their studies. Around 60 per cent of parents found report cards helpful in helping them help their children learn. Just over 60 per cent of students thought that there was someone to whom they could turn to for support if they had a problem and less than half thought that the school supported them in making healthy lifestyle choices.

What happens next?

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

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

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

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How to contact us

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

Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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