

INSPECTION REPORT

National Charity School

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT National Charity School

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.charityschools.com
Telephone	04-282-4499
Address	PO Box 2620, Dubai
Principal	Dr.Kamal Farhat,
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	5,681
Largest nationality group of Students	Arab
Number of Emirati students	38 (less than 1%)
Date of the inspection	17th to 21st February 2013

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The context of the school

The National Charity School is situated in Al Garhoud. The school had been in operation for 30 years and on the present site for 28 years. At the time of the inspection, the school had a total of 5,681 students, aged from five to 17 years, on roll. About 2,950 students attended the school in the morning session and about 2,730 in the afternoon-evening session. Students came from over 30 different countries, mostly Arab, but a very few students were Emiratis.

The school followed the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum. This was restricted for the Grade 11 boys, who could only take science subjects. Girls had slightly more choices, as there was an option to enter either a science or arts stream in Grade 11. All Grade 12 courses led to external MoE tests. A few Grade 12 students were entered for additional external English competency tests. Students were arranged into the usual three cycles of the MoE curriculum.

A new Executive Principal had been appointed, but had only been in post for four months at the time of the inspection. He 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 sections of the school.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The good levels of students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic across the school;
- The positive, mature attitudes towards learning by most students, particularly in Cycle 3, who had outstanding attendance and good relationships with their teachers;
- The good understanding by students about Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness;
- The strategic vision of the new Executive Principal who had set a clear direction for school improvement with an emphasis on teaching and learning supported by appropriate professional development.

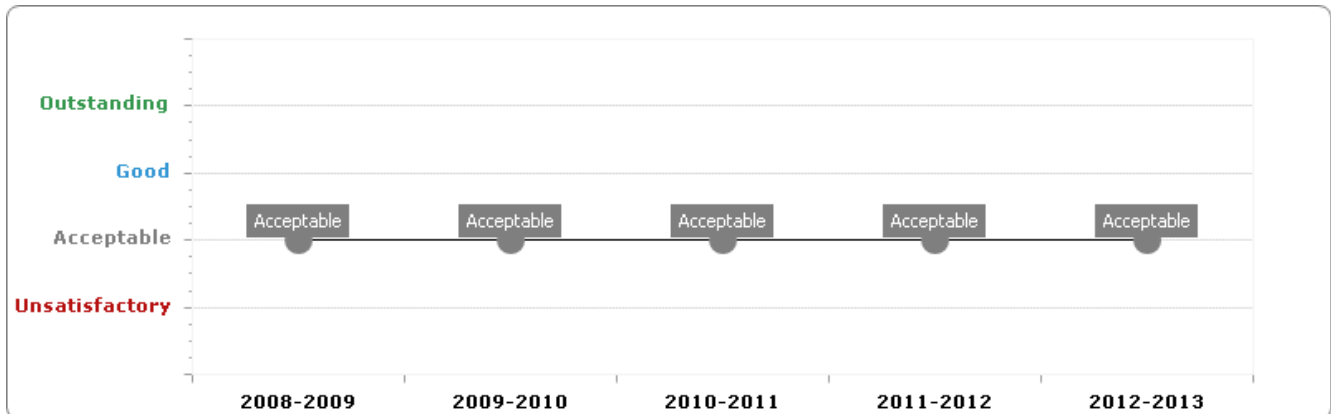
Recommendations

- Improve students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics and specifically improve their scientific investigative skills;
- Share the current best practices to establish consistently good teaching and learning in all three cycles;
- Analyse assessment data and use it to modify the curriculum to match what students have already learned;
- Ensure that students with special educational needs are identified and that appropriate support is provided for them;
- Continue to improve learning resources for all subjects so that students of all ages can engage in active learning.

Progress since the last inspection

- There had been no improvement in students' attainment in Cycle 2 English and Cycle 1 science in the morning session, but there had been improvements in students' attitudes and behaviour in Cycle 2 during the morning session;
- There had been safety improvements in the drop-off and pick-up of students by buses, but there were still safety concerns about the private cars;
- There had been no progress in improving the process of identifying students with special educational needs and little progress in provision for the wide range of students' abilities;
- The new Principal introduced an inclusive process to identify areas for improvement, but the planning documents needed more details.

Trend of overall performance



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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	Acceptable	Good	Good	Acceptable	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	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics						
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science						
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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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	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

The students' attainment was good in Islamic Education and Arabic, but was acceptable in English, mathematics and science. Attainment was good in all cycles for Islamic Education. Most students demonstrated good skills in reciting The Holy Qur'an and had good knowledge about the Prophet's sayings and the basic teachings and concepts of Islam, such as ablution and prayer. Attainment in Arabic as a first language was good throughout the school. Most students used standard Arabic in their speech, and were able to express their thoughts and ideas in short and simple sentences, making use of the vocabulary recently acquired. Late afternoon and evening students showed weaker skills in extended text reading. Students' attainment in English was acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2 in both sessions. Attainment was good in Cycle 3 in the morning school but acceptable in the later session. Students developed good speaking and listening skills as they progressed through the school. Most girls in Cycle 3 were fluent speakers of English, but the boys were usually less confident. Students' skills in writing were weaker in all cycles. Students' ability to apply their English skills to general circumstances, rather than the given texts, was a weaker aspect of their attainment, particularly in Cycles 1 and 2. Attainment in mathematics in relation to international standards was acceptable in Cycles 1, 2, and 3 in both sessions. There had been an improving trend for mathematics in Grade 12 girls' classes over the past three years. In Cycles 2 and 3, girls achieved better results than boys. Science attainment was acceptable throughout the school. Most students in all phases had at least an acceptable knowledge of scientific facts. Science students' practical investigation skills of exploration, prediction, recording and analysis were underdeveloped.

Students' progress was mostly good in Islamic Education and Arabic, but it was acceptable in English, mathematics and science. Students made good progress in Islamic Education in all cycles. Almost all students made good progress in understanding the main Islamic concepts and made good progress in memorising verses from The Holy Qur'an and Hadeeth. In Arabic as a first language, most students made improvements in their language skills, except in extended writing. In Cycle 2, most students demonstrated acceptable progress in reading comprehension and in applying grammar rules while reading. Progress in English was acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2 in both sessions. Progress was good in Cycle 3 in the morning school but only acceptable in the later session. The majority of students entered the school with almost no English and progressed slowly in the younger classes, more steadily through the middle grades and more rapidly in older grades. Progress in mathematics was acceptable in Cycles 1, 2 and 3 in both sessions. The most significant progress was made in the latter stages of Cycle 2 and across Cycle 3. Students made acceptable progress in science in all phases but it was stronger in Cycle 3. Progress in the development of science investigative skills was poor.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Attainment and progress were good by Emirati students in Islamic Education and in Arabic. Attainment and progress were acceptable by the majority of students in English, mathematics and science. However, attainment and progress in English in Cycle 3 were good, especially amongst the girls. Attendance and punctuality were good. Emirati students demonstrated positive attitudes and their behaviour was good. They had engaged fully in the teaching and learning process, had established good relationships with teachers and were involved in representing the school in games. They were proud of Dubai and saw themselves as good ambassadors of the UAE in their own classes. Preparation by the school for further education was poor. Career information was given by class teachers rather than by a guidance team. Parents were involved in their children's education, but the board of governors had no representative of the Emirati families.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good in both sessions with an improvement in the morning school in Cycle 1. Students responded positively to instructions, were co-operative and had respectful relationships with their teachers. Students generally followed the school's advice on keeping fit and healthy. Attendance was good in Cycle 1 and 2 and outstanding in Cycle 3 for both boys and girls. Students had good understanding of how Islamic values played a central part and influenced their everyday lives in Dubai. Most students talked confidently about the UAE's national culture and Emirati traditions and were proud to be living in this country. Students had good appreciation of their own cultures as well as those of their friends from all over the Middle East and beyond. Opportunities for community involvement were limited. Participation in activities outside the school was irregular but improving. The 'student voice' was not influential and often not heard. A few students assumed a number of responsibilities and showed good work ethics, especially in Cycle 3, although they did not have enough opportunities to demonstrate initiative. There was awareness of environmental issues but efforts to lead and participate in conservation and sustainability projects were limited. The majority of students understood the importance of responsibility as well as their own contributions to the community.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

The quality of teaching in both sessions was acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2 and good in Cycle 3. Across all cycles of the school, teachers demonstrated secure subject knowledge and an enthusiasm and interest for their subjects. However, teachers of English did not all have a secure grasp of the English language, so that students' speaking skills were not being developed properly. The planning of lessons was varied, with

good practice observed in Islamic Education and Arabic. Too much lesson planning focused on textbooks. Most lessons did not provide well for the wide range of abilities in the classrooms. A lack of suitable resources limited students' ability to understand some of the abstract concepts being taught, especially in mathematics and science. There were too few reading materials of good quality in English lessons. The teaching of non-key subjects was acceptable in all cycles of the school, but was not as strong as in the key subjects, particularly in the morning session. For instance, the teaching of information and communication technology was at the same pace for all students, meaning that individual students could not make progress independently.

Students' learning in both sessions was acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2 and good in Cycle 3. Students demonstrated positive attitudes to their learning. They were keen, enthusiastic and excited to learn. Students in Cycle 3 were mature and showed high levels of responsibility for their learning and supported the learning of others. However, in too many lessons, teachers' talking dominated, so the students remained passive and disengaged. Students were keen to work in groups and most teachers provided opportunities for paired or group work. Enquiry, research and critical thinking skills were a weakness across the school, especially in Cycles 1 and 2.

The assessment of learning was acceptable throughout the school. Assessment systems and processes were not well developed and students were rarely involved in assessing their own learning. Large quantities of data were collected, but the range and quality was varied. There was limited analysis or review of test results or ongoing achievement data. As a consequence, teachers did not have comprehensive knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses. Teachers marked their students' work regularly but written feedback was not provided to them. Oral feedback in lessons was positive, praising students' efforts, but it rarely enabled students to understand how they might improve their work. Teachers and senior staff members analysed examination results and used the information to organise additional classes for a few students. However, assessment information was not used effectively by teachers to modify their planning to meet the learning needs of all groups of students.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was acceptable in all cycles in both sessions. The breadth, balance, continuity and progression of the curriculum were based on the MoE requirements. Senior staff members had co-operated well to review the curriculum and had clearly identified priorities for improvement. The effects of the improvement actions were beginning to be seen in the best lessons. Those lessons were better planned to meet the needs of all learners, to increase students' involvement and to improve the use of additional

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resources to supporting learning. However, the improved curriculum provision was not widespread enough. Most lessons still relied too heavily on the textbooks, and this inhibited students' development of critical thinking and investigative skills in both science and mathematics. It also limited the extent of challenge in the curriculum for the more able students. The curriculum often did not match up well with the needs of low achieving students. The school had organised an increased number of trips for students' enjoyment, personal development and enrichment. There were insufficient community links to enhance learning.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were acceptable. The school premises were in an acceptable condition but were worn by the heavy use of two sessions of students every day. Acceptable supervisory practices were in place for school transport and for the arrival of students in the morning. A number of students on buses were observed without seatbelts after the later session. Managing the exit of students in the evening required greater rigour and closer monitoring. Records were available which showed that fire drills were regular and that evacuation procedures were implemented. Medical information and medicines were properly stored and secure. Canteens served some healthy snacks, but students had to queue for excessive lengths of time to be served. Training in child protection for all staff had been prioritised.

The quality of support for students was acceptable across all phases. Good staff and student relationships were observed throughout the school. Students were supported by the social workers, who maintained positive links with parents. Attendance and punctuality had improved as result of well organised systems to monitor absence and punctuality concerns. Students' academic progress was recorded and their results were reported to parents at the end of each term. Guidance to Cycle 3 students about careers and further education was unsatisfactory.

[View judgements](#)

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

There were important weaknesses in the school's arrangements for students with special educational needs. Systems for the identification of students with special educational needs were not in place. The school did not have individual education plans for students. Modified teaching strategies for supporting such students were not in place. In almost all the lessons observed, there was no account of the needs of

less able students, which resulted in their making unsatisfactory progress. Poor identification of the specific needs of students also resulted in poor monitoring of their progress.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable and improving. The Executive Principal had been in post a short time and had prioritised the improvement of teaching and learning and raising students' attainment. There was vision and direction widely shared amongst the teaching staff to realise these improvements. The Principal had established good professional relationships with the four section principals, who had responsibilities for different sections of the school. Collectively, the leaders had started to bring about some of the improvements needed.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school knew its strengths and weaknesses because of a process of consultation involving a wide range of staff members. However, evaluations made by the school were over-generous and lacked sufficient objective evidence to support the claims made. Plans were in place but they lacked detail. The regular monitoring of teaching quality lacked evaluative judgements and did not consider learning outcomes. The school's post-inspection action plan did not fully address the recommendations in the last inspection report.

Parental and community involvement in the school was acceptable. Improved communication systems had been put in place to address the concerns raised by parents. Reports were sent to parents regularly but the information in them did not comment on students' progress or their next steps in learning. The involvement of parents in the school was currently limited to a parent's council. The links with the community and local businesses were limited but growing.

Governance of the school was unsatisfactory. However, plans for implementing a Board of Trustees with parent and community representation had been approved by the school's owner and were being put in place at the time of the inspection.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources was unsatisfactory. Management of the day-to-day life of the school was acceptable, but despite some investment in information technology equipment, the lack of provision of basic resources to support teaching and learning had not been fully addressed. Most classes in the school had more than 30 students in attendance. Lessons using information and communications technology were taught in cramped conditions with limited and outdated equipment, so

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that too many students had to share computers. Limited classroom resources in English and a lack of practical learning resources in both science and mathematics lessons were barriers to students' attainment and progress, as were the many overcrowded classrooms.

[View judgements](#)

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

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

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	60	4%
	Last year	177	6%
Teachers	14		10%
Students	47		4%

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

The very few parents who responded to the survey mostly expressed overall satisfaction. Almost all Muslim parents and teachers thought students had a good understanding of Islam and that they were making good progress in Islamic Education and Arabic. Almost all students and most parents thought that teaching and learning were good, but a significant minority was concerned about the lack of technology to support learning. Only a minority of students and teachers believed that there was a wide range of subjects. Most of the parents, teachers and senior students who responded thought the school was well led. Less than half of the parents and students reported that they were involved in decision making. Over one quarter of the students did not think they got helpful feedback from teachers about their learning. Only half of the parents thought the parents' association represented their views.

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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