

INSPECTION REPORT

National Charity School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT National Charity School

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Location | Al Garhoud |
| Type of school | Private |
| Website | www.charityschools.com |
| Telephone | 04-2824499 |
| Address | Al Garhoud Dubai-P.O.BOX:2620 |
| Principal | Dr.Kamal Farhat, |
| Curriculum | UAE 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 | 5667 |
| Largest nationality group of Students | Arab |
| Number of Emirati students | 18 (less than 1%) |
| Date of the inspection | 26th to 30th January 2014 |

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The context of the school

The National Charity School was founded in 1968 and is situated in Al Garhoud. At the time of the inspection, the school had a total of 5667 students, aged from 5 to 17 years, on the roll. Slightly more students attended the morning session than the afternoon-evening session. Over 30 different nationalities of students were enrolled with most from Arabic countries, and included around 18 Emirati students. Approximately 1200 students were new to the school this year. The school followed the UAE Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum and had three Cycles. All classes across the school were single gender. Girls had more subject choices than boys, with an option to enter either a science or arts stream in Grade 11. Grade 11 and 12 boys were restricted to a science course. All Grade 12 courses led to external MoE examinations. A few Grade 12 students were entered for additional external English competency tests.

The principal had been in post for 14 months and was responsible for three National Charity Schools outside of Dubai. He was supported by a senior management team, which included three experienced principal teachers, and one new boys' Cycle 2 leader. Each had considerable autonomy for running their section of the school. They had had some impact on improving the learning of students in the school. There were 133 full-time teachers, with almost all having a teaching qualification. Thirteen teachers were new to the school this year. A number of teachers, particularly in the girls section taught only a single shift.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The good attainment and progress in Islamic Education across the school, in Arabic in Cycles 2 and 3 and in mathematics in Cycle 3 (evening);
- Students' positive attitudes and behaviour and their good understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness across all cycles;
- The strategic vision of the principal and senior staff plus the commitment of all staff to provide improved educational opportunities for students of all abilities and backgrounds;
- The supportive family ethos with strong relationships between staff and students, and between parents and the school.

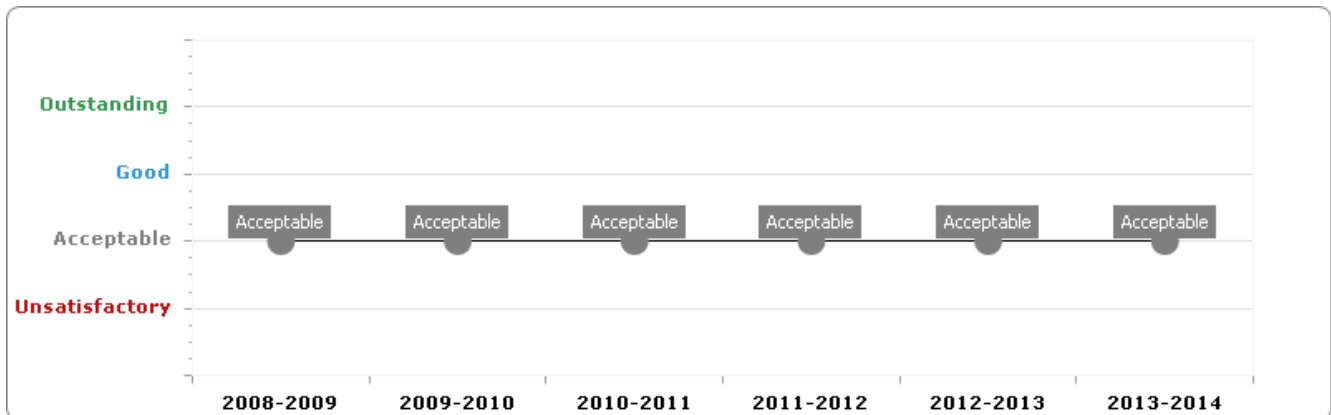
Recommendations

- Improve provision in English, mathematics and science to raise attainment and progress through:
 - further review and development of teaching strategies to improve opportunities for more collaborative, independent and challenging work, to ensure students think more deeply and understand more fully;
 - improving all systems of assessment, including data gathering and the accuracy of data analyses, to modify the curriculum and help guide lesson planning;
- Improve the identification and provision for students with special educational needs;
- Improve the quantity and range of available learning resources and their use to engage students in all cycles in active learning.

Progress since the last inspection

- A renewed vision, mission and direction developed within the school;
- Improved facilities including upgraded science laboratories, student gardens, the area housing the school library and data projectors in all classrooms;
- Increased staff professional development which was beginning to impact on the quality of provision;
- An additional new leader for Cycle 2 boys and a new staff professional development coordinator;
- Improved security both within the school and on school transport;
- Strengthening of good relationships with parents;
- A newly formed, active Board of Governors which was supportive of the school's development.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

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| | Cycle 1 - Morning | Cycle 2 - Morning | Cycle 3 - Morning | Cycle 1 - Evening | Cycle 2 - Evening | Cycle 3 - Evening |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Quality of students' learning skills | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

[Read paragraph](#)

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 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Personal responsibility | Good | Good | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Students' understanding of Islamic values and their 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 teaching 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 | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Assessment | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all 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 |
| Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students | Unsatisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Unsatisfactory |

[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 |
| Parents and the community | Good |
| Governance | Acceptable |
| Management, including staffing, facilities and resources | Acceptable |

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

In Islamic Education, most students demonstrated good memorisation and recitation skills in Holy Qur'an. They had a strong knowledge of Islamic beliefs and practices and understood the meanings of Hadeeths they learned. Older students could explain Islam's views on a number of contemporary topics and identify the context of many Qur'anic verses. In Arabic as first language the majority of students had good listening skills. They understood dialogue and spoke short sentences. Reading skills of the majority of students were above expected levels. Writing skills were less well developed in the elementary phase compared with higher phases. The proportion of younger students in Cycle 1 with lower reading and writing levels was relatively larger in the evening than in the morning school. In English, attainment was in line with curriculum standards. Students' oral communication skills were better than their writing skills. They had limited opportunities to broaden their vocabulary through reading and this inhibited their abilities to extend the content of their writing. In primary mathematics, students acquired increased competence in the four operations of number. Their skills of investigation and reasoning were weaker. At higher phases students' competence in number and geometry was acceptable but their skills of investigation and reasoning were weaker. They built well on prior knowledge, but younger students did not have sufficiently sound knowledge of inverse operation to check calculations. In primary science, the majority of students had some knowledge of natural features such as volcanoes and rocks. Their scientific and investigation skills were limited. They had too few opportunities to undertake simple scientific experiments in order to find things out independently. In senior phases students' attainment was variable, being strongest in biology and geology. Girls generally attained higher than the boys.

In Islamic Education, most students in the lower grades made good progress in understanding Islamic teachings and the Hadeeths on proper Islamic manners. By upper phases, students had improved their Qur'anic recitation and achieved a better understanding of key aspects of Islamic family law and a number of contemporary social issues. In Arabic as first language, the majority of students made good progress in listening and in reading while speaking and free writing was developing at a slower rate, particularly in Cycle 1. Progress for younger students in the evening school was slower, particularly in independent writing skills. In English across all phases, progress was in line with curriculum expectations. Most students demonstrated improved confidence in their abilities to communicate but made less progress in the development of their extended writing. In mathematics, students made acceptable progress during lessons and over time. Better progress was made when assessment was used well and practical resources were provided. Where there was unsatisfactory progress the teachers' subject knowledge was weak or there was a lack of challenge for more able students. In science in all three phases, students had not yet developed the skills for practical enquiry or the confidence to apply their learning to solve complex scientific problems. The majority of students were restricted to theoretical knowledge, with limited application to their

immediate environment or natural features. They developed limited ability to apply scientific knowledge to unfamiliar contexts.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

The quality of students' learning skills across the school was acceptable. The majority of students were enthusiastic, had positive attitudes to learning and were able to work independently for short periods of time. Across all phases, there were positive classroom climates, where almost all students could develop confidence. When given the opportunity, most students worked cooperatively in small groups but they lacked the skills to debate and challenge each other in their learning. Most students could make some connections between new and previous learning but few were able to demonstrate a deeper understanding. Critical thinking skills and enquiry based learning skills remain largely underdeveloped. Students' evaluation of their own learning and knowledge of how to improve in their work were under-developed.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility, their understanding of Islamic values, and their local, cultural and global awareness were good. Students' attitudes and behaviour in the majority of lessons and around the school were good although, when teaching was too didactic, a minority become passive learners. Relationships between staff and students were respectful, warm and supportive. There was a relaxed, family atmosphere at break times and students were keen to participate in interactive assemblies. Attendance was good overall and outstanding in Cycle 3. However, a significant number of students arrived late at the start of each session.

Students showed great respect for Islam and its values of hard work, honesty, and respect for others. Daily assemblies helped create an Islamic ethos in the school environment. Students developed a high level of appreciation of the UAE and its contributions through their participation in school events and competitions to honour its leaders and heritage. Displays on school walls and in classrooms celebrated the Arabic language, students' different cultures, and their own art work on other world cultures.

Students were willing to engage in community projects. Seniors participated in the student initiated "Change" group assisting others to overcome problems. They were active in developing and sustaining the school's vegetable gardens. There had been limited impact of student voice on decision making and students had not yet developed leadership skills to promote sustainability and conservation.

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable. Whilst there were some engaging and stimulating lessons, the majority, particularly in the lowest phase, did not challenge the learners sufficiently. Teachers were enthusiastic and worked hard. In Islamic Education and Arabic, teachers used good questioning which improved learning opportunities. Resources were limited but in some lessons, teachers used these effectively. In the better lessons, students collaborated well to support each other. In a minority of lessons, teachers used questioning well to encourage students to think critically and extend their understanding. Students demonstrated good behaviour and were eager to learn. Lessons had been planned and, in most cases, objectives were written on blackboards for students to see. Planning did not meet the needs of all learners because differentiation was not developed to extend understanding or to challenge the more able. Activities were the same for all students in lessons. Learning was often too heavily dependent on textbooks or worksheets. This limited progress.

Assessment was acceptable throughout the school. In Grades 6 to 12, students' achievements were monitored through internal and external examinations. In Grade 1 to 5, assessments were by teacher assessment. However, the data from these assessments was not used successfully to identify gaps in students' learning and therefore did not help the planning of the lessons. Ongoing assessment in lessons was not used well enough to restructure the lesson in order to challenge students. Teachers gave students oral feedback in lessons and praised success but there was little variety in assessment practices to evaluate students' knowledge. There were no clear processes to ensure that students knew what they needed to do to improve their work, and no opportunities for them to assess their learning. Assessment had a limited effect on improving students' progress and attainment.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was acceptable. The school leaders acknowledged a need to extend students' experience beyond the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum. Subject leaders ensured cohesion and curriculum development through improvement planning and weekly meetings, although there was limited integration of ICT and few opportunities to develop research skills or critical thinking. Cross-curricular links existed through assemblies, lectures, visits and special events. Some were relevant to students' needs, such as driver safety and an anti-smoking event. Twenty students visited a cancer hospital. However these events and visits had little impact on the majority of students. Inter-school competitions existed; supporting Arabic and Islamic Education, and extending provision for small numbers of more able students. A Science Olympiad

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involved just a few students. Attempts were being made to relate the curriculum to real world experiences, including a visit to a mall using the Metro. There was a positive theme of “preparation for life” which ran throughout the enrichment programme. Opportunities for developing critical thinking, for independent learning and for providing challenge, were very few because much of the curriculum was too dependent on textbooks and worksheets. No provision was made for different learning styles. The lack of internet provision and the insufficient and outdated library resources also placed restrictions on the quality of curriculum provision. There was inadequate identification of students with special educational needs or those who may be gifted or talented. Consequently, the curriculum was not adapted to meet the individual needs of students. The co-curriculum provided activities for distinguished students, but focused on the inter-school competitions involving only a few students, selected by teachers. Extension worksheets provided more of the same activities rather than extending knowledge, understanding or skills. As a result, students were not challenged to progress beyond curriculum expectations. The boys in Grades 11 and 12 did not have equal opportunities; they were required to follow the “Science” stream, whilst the girls had the option of an “Arts” stream.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The provision for health and safety in the school was acceptable. There was a strong ethos of care and support which underpinned staff efforts to ensure that students were secure, safe and healthy. Arrangements for general supervision, transport and wellbeing of students were appropriately implemented, although a minority of students who arrived at school very early were not always appropriately cared for. The school had appropriate records which demonstrated regular safety checks were made. The arrangements to ensure the school grounds were clean were effective. However, other areas of the school were not sufficiently well monitored to ensure they remained clean throughout the school day. The school community had received appropriate training and practised safety procedures on a regular basis. The management and systematic monitoring of the child protection procedures were not fully developed but staff were familiar with the child protection procedures. The school had developed the provision to promote healthy lifestyles and had begun to respond to the needs of the school community.

The quality of support for students was acceptable across the school. Relationships between teachers and students were respectful. Teachers managed behaviour well in lessons. Consequently there was no disruption to learning and students were confident to ask questions and seek confirmation of their understanding, although they did not always receive sufficient verbal feedback. In addition, the marking of students’ work did not support students well enough and show them how to improve. Individual education plans were in place for some low attaining students but these were not used adequately in lessons to ensure suitable support or challenge. Although some improvements had been made to the guidance and counselling

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provided for older students with regard to their chosen career paths, this remained inconsistent. Social workers maintained a good level of contact with parents regarding attendance and punctuality and this had ensured that attendance levels remained good.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The leadership of the school was acceptable. It had a renewed purpose and drive for improvement. The principal had communicated a vision of greater team work to support improved student learning outcomes. The senior leadership team and heads of department were dedicated and proficient. They were actively involved in the change process and most were leading their teams effectively. Levels of communication throughout the school had improved and there was increased delegation of responsibility. Improvements such as upgraded science laboratories, the library and ICT had occurred. Regular professional development for staff and management had been started. The management team had worked hard to address the recommendations of the 2013 inspection report and had been successful in a few actions. Leaders demonstrated an improving capacity to improve the school further.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. The school had consulted with staff, parents and members of the Governing Body to gather evidence for its self-evaluation process. This had improved the school's understanding of its own work. However, evaluations made by the school were over-generous and lacked sufficient objective evidence to support claims. Arrangements and procedures to monitor teaching quality had improved but a school-wide systematic approach to targeted staff professional development was lacking. Consequently some weaknesses remained. The school's action plan was based upon the 2013 DSIB inspection recommendations and covered all of the main recommendations. It included actions and indicators for success, but the school struggled when attempting to determine how best to achieve these actions. The school had made some progress in meeting some of these recommendations but identification and provision for students with special educational needs, and teaching and learning across all phases required improvement.

Partnership with parents and the community were good. Parents were highly supportive of the school and its senior management. Relationships between the school and parents were very positive. Three parental groups met formally on a regular basis and members of the groups regularly visited the school, helping with school activities and teacher training. The school sought parental views through surveys and responded to their opinions. Regular reports on students' progress were issued twice a year. Improved levels of communication included teachers communicating by email, and a developing web-based information

system. When students were experiencing problems, the school promptly contacted parents to discuss the issues and offer support.

Governance of the school was acceptable. The recently established governing body had a growing influence on the school. Governors held the school to account for its actions. Representation on the board of ten included academics, businessmen, staff members and parents. The board had recently sought and responded positively to the views of all stakeholders. There was a renewed drive to support the school in its development including the improved quality of teaching, stronger range of teaching resources, and improved facilities.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable overall. Sound day-to-day management of the school ensured its efficient running. Most teachers had appropriate qualifications. Comprehensive staff and management training had occurred on lesson planning, teaching strategies and the identification of students with special educational needs. While premises were of an acceptable quality, some classrooms were cramped because some classes had up to 40 students. Most students acted responsibly and respected property and the school environment. The school had improved its physical appearance. The library, science laboratories and gardens had been upgraded. There were improved classroom ICT facilities including a few interactive white boards. However there was no school-wide internet access. Limited resources in English and a lack of practical learning resources in both science and mathematics lessons restricted students' progress. The library was not well stocked with modern texts, reference materials for research or English language novels to encourage reading for pleasure.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The small number of Emirati students performed in line with their peers. Their performance overall was acceptable in English, mathematics and science but good in Arabic A and Islamic Education. Students behaved well and contributed to the life of the school.

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

Provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) was unsatisfactory. Although the school had an ethos of accepting all students whatever their level of ability or social background it did not have a system in place to identify students with SEN. The school did not have a SEN specialist to develop identification, policy or procedure to guide and train staff. As a result, monitoring of students with SEN was inadequate. Teachers did not have the information needed to modify the curriculum and students' progress was

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unsatisfactory in most lessons. The school was aware of those students who had a physical disability, and appropriate arrangements were made for their personal needs. Some provision was made for higher attaining students, through competitions and external projects, but this was not linked to their specific gifts or talents. Where a very small number of parents had provided external assessment of their children's special requirements, the school worked closely with them to plan how parents could support their children's on-going learning and development.

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

Almost all teachers of Arabic as a first language had good subject knowledge. They had clear learning objectives in their lessons but their expectations were not always sufficiently high. Most teachers planned for collaborative learning but only a few used it effectively. Teachers' clear instruction and confident presentation as well as their consistent communication in standard Arabic helped students to improve their skills. However, only a few teachers promoted critical thinking and investigative learning through the subject. Teaching strategies were less effective in the evening school, particularly in developing students' abilities to read and write independently. The school followed the UAE National Curriculum. However, in upper grades, expectations were too low and did not always meet curriculum expectations, particularly in creative writing for older students. Although most students were able to use extra reading material, there was too little of it available. The school did not provide many opportunities to go beyond the textbook except in a few Arabic competitions. There were no curriculum modifications to meet the needs of specific groups of students. There were only a few Arabic language activities and competitions to enrich the curriculum. Most of the lessons in middle and high phases included ICT presentations to enrich the content. However, the curriculum did not include a wide enough range of opportunities for students to produce the language creatively and in a wide range of contexts both orally and in writing. Despite these shortcomings, students made good progress.

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 | 136 | 4% |
| | Last year | 93 | 6% |
| Teachers | 16 | | 4% |
| Students | 192 | | 9% |

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

Only a few parents, teachers and students responded to the surveys. Responses from parents indicated an overall satisfaction with the quality of education offered by the school. They were positive about the progress students made in Islamic Education, mathematics, science and Arabic. Students reflected positive attitudes to homework and were of the opinion that their education was enabling them to become productive and positive members of the community. Comments from both parents and students raised concerns about the limited access students had to ICT and the need to broaden the curriculum including greater access to field trips. Teachers were positive in their support of the school and its role in providing an education for a diverse student population. They believed that the school made a difference to the lives of its students.

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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