

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Dubai International School - Al Garhoud

Report published in April 2013

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai International School - Al Garhoud

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dis.sch.ae
Telephone	04 282 3513
Address	P O Box 15495, Dubai
Principal	Mr. Nafez Hayek, نافذ الحايك
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades	3-18 / Kindergarten 1-Grade 12
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	2559
Largest nationality group of Students	Arab
Number of Emirati students	1140 (45%)
Date of the inspection	10th to 14th March 2013

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## The context of the school

Dubai International School is a private school located in Al Garhoud. It provides education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Grade 12, aged three to 18 years. The school follows a curriculum based on US standards in English, mathematics and science. The programmes for Islamic Education and Arabic followed the UAE Ministry of Education guidelines.

At the time of the inspection, there were 2,559 students on roll, almost half of whom were of Emirati nationality. Almost all students were of UAE or other Arab nationalities. There were 175 teachers, most of whom had appropriate qualifications in their subjects. Around one third had a teaching qualification. Teachers were supported by 24 teaching assistants.

The Principal was in his first year in post and was supported by a Vice-Principal.

## Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

### Key strengths

- Good progress in English, mathematics and science in Kindergarten;
- Good attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science in high school phases, and in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language in the elementary phase;
- The developing role of the Student Council in showing leadership and initiative, gathering views of students, and contributing to the life and work of the school;
- The improved curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment in Kindergarten, and improved curriculum, teaching, and learning in the high school phase;
- The promotion of healthy lifestyles;

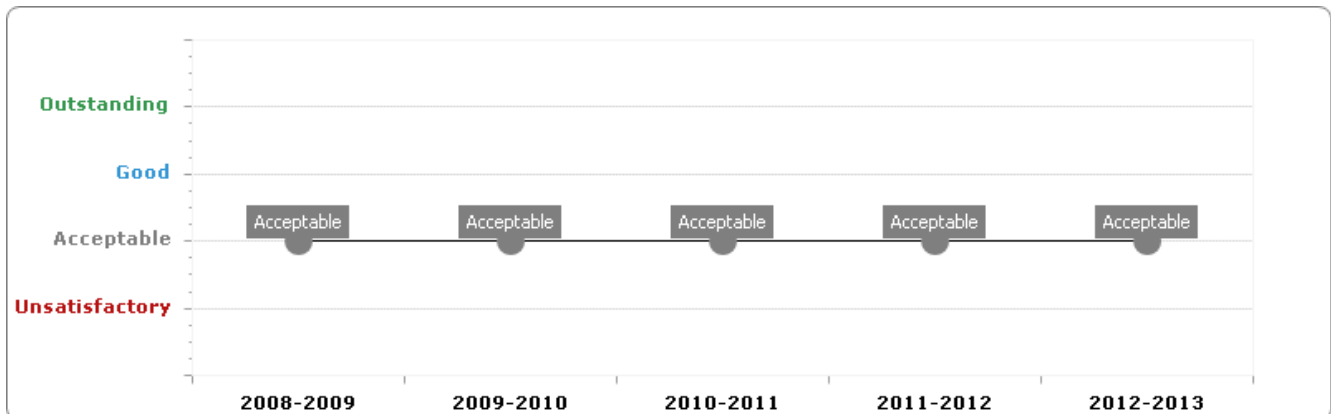
### Recommendations

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the middle school phase and elementary school phases;
- Ensure that all staff know, understand and can implement the school's child protection policy and procedures;
- Continue to improve the identification of and the provision for students with special educational needs;
- Make better use of external examination data, aligned to US standards, when planning for improvements in teaching, learning, curriculum and management.

## Progress since the last inspection

- Under the leadership of the senior team and middle leaders, teachers had worked to raise attainment in science in the Kindergarten and high school, and in mathematics in the high school. There had also been improvements in progress in English in the Kindergarten and in the middle phase;
- There had been significant progress in developing older students as leaders and giving them more opportunities to take responsibility. However, the school had not done enough to encourage students across the school to take responsibility and show initiative in community and environmental projects;
- There had been improvement in teaching, learning and the curriculum in Kindergarten and in the high school. Assessment had improved in Kindergarten. Staff knew that there was a need to continue to increase the use of technology in teaching and learning;
- There had been some improvements in the identification of and provision for students' special educational needs, although further development was required ;
- Staff now used a wider range of strategies to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. The involvement of the student council in gathering views of students on aspects of school life, and the staff response to those views, was commendable. The overall quality of leadership had improved.

## Trend of overall performance



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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Islamic Education</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>English</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
<b>Mathematics</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
<b>Science</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Acceptable	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Quality of students' learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)



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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment was acceptable overall, with some exceptions. Attainment was good in science in the Kindergarten, in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language in the elementary phase, and in English, mathematics and science in the high school. Students had basic understanding of Islamic concepts and could apply their knowledge to familiar contexts. Recitation skills were weaker than other skills. In Arabic as a first language, most students could read aloud fluently with understanding. At all phases, knowledge of grammar was good, but its application was more limited. Most students of Arabic as an additional language had good listening skills, but speaking and writing skills were limited. The main strength in English was students' attainment in speaking and listening. In the high school, students were able to debate skillfully. Writing skills were weaker. In mathematics, calculation skills were well developed. Application of these and other skills was more limited. Students in the high school applied algebra and calculus skills well. In science, skills of enquiry and observation were well developed. Planning of fair tests was done less well. In the high school, students could effectively plan and evaluate investigations.

Progress was good in Kindergarten. It was acceptable elsewhere, with the exception of good progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language in the elementary phase, English in the middle phase, and English, mathematics and science in the high school. Students' progress in Islamic Education was limited by the modest expectations of the teachers. Progress in Arabic reading and speaking was more rapid than the development of writing skills. In English, students made good progress in listening and speaking from starting Kindergarten. Progress in reading slowed in the elementary phase. Progress in understanding the technicalities of written English was better than the development of expression. In mathematics, students occasionally made unsatisfactory progress because of weak teaching, particularly in the elementary phase. More able students often made the best progress. As students progressed through the school, they acquired an increasing breadth of scientific knowledge. Understanding of scientific concepts was less well developed.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

The provision for Emirati students and their resultant attainment and progress were broadly in line with those of other students in all phases and in all subjects.

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were good in the Kindergarten, elementary and high school phases, and acceptable in the middle phase. Almost all students behaved well in class. At break times, some middle school students were sometimes disrespectful towards non-teaching staff. Most students made healthy food choices and followed the school's helpful advice on healthy lifestyles. Attendance reported by the school for the previous term was outstanding; during the week of the inspection it was good overall. A minority of students were not always punctual for the start of assemblies or lessons. The quality of students' understanding of Islamic values, and their local, cultural and global awareness, was good in all phases. Students had a clear understanding of how the values of Islam influenced life in Dubai. They appreciated the heritage and culture of the UAE. Most knew about and appreciated other cultures. The extent to which students demonstrated community and environmental responsibility was good at Kindergarten and the high school, and acceptable elsewhere. Almost all Kindergarten children participated responsibly in learning activities and in taking care of their classroom environment. Most older students displayed a positive work ethic. Older students had participated in beneficial school and community support activities such as an anti-litter campaign, charity fundraisers, and art workshops. Involvement with the local community and participation in caring for the school and local environment was not fully developed, particularly in the elementary and middle phases. Older students who were on the student council demonstrated initiative in a wide range of constructive contributions to the school.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

Teaching was good in the Kindergarten and the high school, and acceptable in the elementary and middle school phases. Most teachers had strong subject knowledge. In the Kindergarten and high school, they understood how students learn and had high expectations for them. In the elementary and middle school phases, teachers did not always plan lessons to meet the learning needs of all groups of students. The best lessons involved a variety of teaching approaches, effective use of resources and available technology, and learning in groups. A minority of lessons were over-reliant on textbooks, involved too much teacher talk, and did not allow sufficient time for students to apply their learning. In the majority of lessons, effective questioning led to improvements in students' critical thinking. Oral guidance to students in lessons helped them to improve, but written feedback was ineffective. There were strengths in teaching in French and in practical technology lessons in the computer rooms.

Learning was good in the Kindergarten and high school and acceptable in the elementary and middle school phases. While most students enjoyed practical work and the opportunities to work in groups, the majority of elementary and middle school students were too dependent on the teachers. Most students acted on teachers' guidance to improve their work, but they did not have a clear awareness of their strengths and areas for improvement, or their next steps in learning. Teachers' development of students' skills in critical thinking was improving. Students increasingly were helped to make links between their learning and the real world. However, this was inconsistent, especially when teachers did not make the links explicit. When they had opportunities, students were adept at using technology to complete assignments at home and in school.

Assessment was good in Kindergarten and acceptable elsewhere in the school. Effective systems for tracking children's progress were being used well in Kindergarten to identify progress from starting points. Most teachers in KG used the data effectively to plan to meet the needs of groups of children. In the other phases, tracking was less effective and this limited teachers' understanding of students' progress. Written feedback was weak throughout the school, which also limited students' progress. The new tracking system was starting to identify underachieving students and was beginning to help teachers improve support in the classroom. The majority of teachers were becoming more proficient in referencing US standards when providing oral feedback to students. Overall though, the use of external benchmarking linked to US curriculum standards was limited. This made internal school assessments less valid. Assessment data were not analysed accurately and this restricted teachers' understanding of how they could improve teaching and learning.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good in Kindergarten and high school phases, but acceptable in the elementary and middle school phases. The balance and breadth of the curriculum had been improved, particularly in Kindergarten and the high school. Transition arrangements were effective. Senior leaders were successfully encouraging teachers to move away from text-based, teacher-centred lessons. Teachers were introducing more opportunities for student investigation, critical thinking, and challenging activities. However, these improvements were not being implemented equally in all phases, so students' learning needs were not always met. Senior leaders met with subject specialists regularly to review the curriculum although choices of elective programmes in the high school were limited. In the upper grades there was a good range of extra-curricular or cross-curricular events, for example acting, discussions, debates and projects such as the Math World program. The 12<sup>th</sup> grade participated in the Science Fair. However, most of these opportunities

were not available to younger students for whom there was a more limited choice of enrichment activities. The school was working to develop additional activities for students, involving links with the community.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

The school's arrangements for health and safety were good in the Kindergarten and elementary school phases, and acceptable in the middle and high school phases. The overall arrangements for arrival and departure of students were acceptable but procedures for checking the passenger lists of older students on buses were weak. Emergency evacuation procedures and testing of fire-fighting equipment were effective. The school had improved the signposting of evacuation routes. Medical staff carried out their duties very well. The promotion of healthy lifestyles was a positive feature of the school's work. The child protection policy had been updated but some staff did not fully understand the contents of the policy or the implications for their work.

The quality of support was acceptable at all levels. Teachers knew their students well and were aware of their social, physical, emotional, and academic needs. Teachers had a good rapport with students, and behaviour was well managed overall, though less consistently in the middle school phase. The school monitored attendance well, although systems for ensuring student punctuality needed improvement. The school provided helpful and well-informed guidance for students about a range of matters, including personal and social concerns, and future careers or university education. Good support was given for students' applications for university.

[View judgements](#)

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

The school had improved its system for identifying students with a range of special educational needs, although the identification of learning and communication needs was underdeveloped. Provision for students typically included modifications within lessons. The quality of support in lessons was inconsistent, resulting in variable progress in different subjects and from teacher to teacher. Students with special educational needs were not provided with specialist support for learning and communication difficulties. Strong co-operation between the school and the Dubai Early Childhood Development Centre resulted in a well-co-ordinated and effective programme for a number of children in Kindergarten.

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. The new Principal and the Vice-Principal had set out a clear and appropriate vision of how the school should improve. They were working well together and with other staff to implement improvements. They had supported middle level leaders to take responsibility for change and improvement in their own areas. The quality of leadership from staff at those levels was now more consistent, although some variation remained. Relationships were cordial, and communication between staff members was done effectively. The school's capacity to improve was increasing, and there had been significant impact on students' attainment and progress in some subjects.

The quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning was acceptable. Senior staff carried out a wide range of activities to gather information on the school's work and to evaluate its quality. Senior staff had an accurate view of most of the school's key priorities. They had been successful in identifying the development needs of teachers and supporting them to improve. Their knowledge of strengths and weaknesses in the school's health and safety arrangements was less secure than for other aspects of the school's work. Middle leaders were becoming more adept at evaluation, but analysis of student attainment data was one aspect in need of some improvement. The involvement of the student council in gathering students' views on teaching, learning and assessment was a positive feature.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Parents had opportunities to be involved, for example in the Kindergarten phase, by attending celebrations or helping in reading activities. Parents found the range of meetings and communications from the school to be regular and helpful. The new school website was a positive feature. The school planned to improve reports to parents on their children's progress by setting out more clearly the children's next steps in learning. A start had been made in broadening links with the community.

Governance was good. Board members were appropriately involved in setting the strategic direction for the school. Representatives met regularly with senior staff and visited the school frequently. The Board held senior staff to account in a rigorous but supportive manner. There was no parent representation on the Board but parents' views were sought regularly.

The quality of management was acceptable. Senior staff were aware that certain aspects needed to be more systematic. Almost all staff had suitable qualifications in subjects, and around one third had post-graduate qualifications in teaching. There was a good range of facilities which were maintained well. Some classes were overcrowded.

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The school had improved provision for computer studies, but information and communication technology for students to use in their learning in other subjects was limited. The school was aware that there would be a growing need for more resources as the style of teaching changed to a more student-centred approach.

[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	212	17%
	Last year	174	14%
Teachers	104		60%
Students	366		65%

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

Just under one fifth of parents responded to the survey. A majority of students and teachers responded. Most parents who responded were satisfied with the quality of education. They felt that their children enjoyed school and were making good progress in the key subjects. They had positive views on the quality of teaching and learning, and slightly less positive views on the curriculum. Students' views were more negative than those of parents. For example, less than half of the students felt that the school dealt well with bullying, while over half of parents, and most teachers, thought the school did so. Most parents and teachers thought that students were treated fairly, but only a minority of students thought so. Most parents thought that the school was well led and leaders listened to them. They had positive views about communication from the school. A majority felt that they were involved in decision-making. Students' views on these aspects were much less positive.



## 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](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

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