

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai International Private School

Report published in April, 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai International private School

Location	Al Garhoud
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dis.sch.ae
Telephone	04-2823513
Address	Al Garhoud- Dubai P.O. BOX 15495
Principal	Mr Nafez Hayek
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18/KG to Grade 12
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	2558
Largest nationality group of Students	UAE
Number of Emirati students	1164 (46%)
Date of the inspection	10th to 13th February 2014

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The context of the school

Dubai International Private School is located in Al Garhoud. The school provided education for boys and girls from Kindergarten to Grade 12, aged three to eighteen years. At the time of the inspection, there were 2558 students on roll. Students were predominantly Arab. Just under half were Emiratis. Most students spoke English as an additional language. A total of twenty-one students were receiving support for their special needs. Students were grouped into the KG department, Elementary (Grades 1 -5), Middle (Grades 6 – 8) and High (Grades 9 – 12).

The school followed the US Common Core standards in English and mathematics and the “Next Generation” (GN) science curriculum. Islamic Education and Arabic, as a first and as an additional language, were also part of the core curriculum and the programmes of study followed the Ministry of Education requirements. A variety of elective subjects were taught at the high school level. French was mandatory up until the end of Grade 3. From Grades 4 to 9, French became an elective.

There were 168 teachers including the senior leaders. There were no US or Canadian teachers. Few of the teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. Around ten percent of the teachers were new to the school this year. The principal had been in post for two years having previously worked in the school as an academic adviser.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The good quality of leadership, teaching, learning and assessment in KG which resulted in good attainment and progress in all KG subjects;
- Good progress in English across the school;
- Good attitudes, behaviour and strong relationships across the school, especially in KG;
- Good understanding of Islamic values and cultural and global awareness;
- Good quality provision for health and safety across the school.

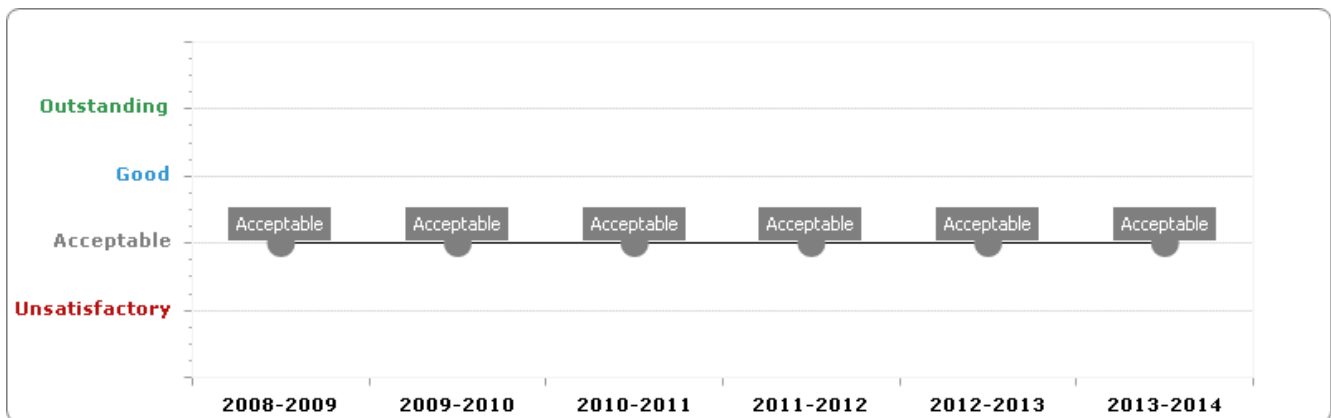
Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language;
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning through:
 - The use of accurate assessment data, aligned to the relevant standards, to inform the planning and delivery of curriculum to meet the needs of all students;
 - Ensuring that all senior leaders have appropriate expertise and experience to lead improvements;
 - The implementation of targeted, high-quality and external professional development for all teachers;
 - Enabling all students to use mobile technology as an everyday part of their learning.
- Ensure that teachers modify the curriculum and provide targeted support for students' special educational needs (SEN) based on a reliable identification system;
- Use externally validated assessments to moderate the school's own assessments and to give staff, the students and their parents, a realistic view of students' attainment in an international context;
- Improve development planning through:
 - Greater rigour of self-evaluation;
 - Clearer identification of key priorities and understanding of how they relate to other areas of school performance;
 - Focused evaluation of the impact of the initiatives on the quality of student learning.

Progress since the last inspection

- Child protection improvements have been fully implemented;
- International benchmarked assessments (ACER) have been introduced for all students in some grades in elementary, middle and high school phases and SATs for all students in Grades 11 and 12;
- Systems for the identification of students with SEN have been created but were not being used fully;
- Opportunities to develop students' learning skills have increased in the middle school phase.

Trend of overall performance



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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Quality of students' learning skills	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

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

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Good	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
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Good
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment and progress of all students across all subjects varied between acceptable and good. Attainment and progress were good throughout the kindergarten as a result of consistently good teaching. In the elementary phase, most students had good knowledge of the key principles of faith and worship in Islam whereas in the middle and high phases most students' knowledge was basic. Across the school, Qur'an recitations skills for the majority of the students were weak. In Arabic as a first and additional language, most students demonstrated strong listening skills. Students' speaking skills, in Arabic as an additional language, were good but their use of standard Arabic was less advanced. Writing skills were the least developed. Speaking and listening in English were good throughout all phases. Writing was strongest in the high school phase and students demonstrated strong skills in literary analysis. The majority of students in the high school phase had sound knowledge, clear understanding and could apply their mathematical learning in some contexts. Students had strong science content knowledge in areas such as the weather in KG, in Grade 4 sediments and fossils, and in Grade 12 biology the nervous system. Practical activities that involved all students were common in KG and developing in high school.

Students in the elementary phase made good progress in Islamic Education and were able to explain what they had learned. In the middle and high school phases, students' memorisation and recitation, skills developed less quickly. In Arabic as a first and as an additional language students made better progress in listening and speaking than in the other language skills. Writing was developing. In English, students made good progress in their writing from KG to the high school phase. Many students read with fluency and inflection. Senior high students had good inference skills and could identify points of view of different literary characters. In mathematics, kindergarten children rapidly learned number bonds and developed a good understanding of place value. This progress slowed in the elementary and middle phases of the school. Progress was most rapid towards the end of high school by which time most students had developed their conceptual understanding and application of knowledge of mathematics to real-life situations. Students progressed best in science lessons when there were clear lesson objectives, task descriptions and constructive feedback from teachers.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Learning skills were acceptable in the elementary phase and good in the rest of the school. Students enjoyed learning, particularly when collaborating in groups and undertaking hands-on activities. They used rubrics and checklists of skills to identify their strengths and weaknesses. However, in some classrooms, the didactic teaching did not allow students to develop their skills of independent learning. Students enjoyed

opportunities to communicate their learning through activities such as role-playing and making movies or presentations using IT. They collaborated well in order to solve problems, make models, debate issues and conduct investigations. Strong connections to the real world and to prior learning were more evident in the better lessons, particularly in KG. Critical thinking was evident when the level of challenge was high, especially in the high school phase. Students' use of IT was developing steadily but students did not have sufficient opportunities to use it for everyday learning at school.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility was outstanding in KG and good in the elementary, middle and high school phases. Almost all students were keen to learn and most behaved appropriately even when not directly supervised. This was a strong feature of KG. Relationships between students and between students and teachers were strong. Students showed care and consideration towards each other. Most students were aware of what constituted a healthy diet and this was reflected in the choices that they made. Attendance was outstanding but some students were not punctual to lessons.

Students had good understanding of Islamic values and the importance of Islam in modern society. They had a good knowledge of the heritage and local traditions of the UAE and could explain their relevance to people in Dubai. They appreciated the multi-cultural nature of Dubai.

Community and environmental responsibility were good in KG and the high school and acceptable in elementary and middle phases. Students showed responsibility in all phases of the school. Even the youngest children in the school volunteered to help their teachers with everyday tasks and routines. Some high school students were pleased to be chosen to represent their peers on the Student Council. Many were involved in fund raising for charity. Most students had a strong work ethic and many enjoyed making choices over projects to study. In all phases, students were aware of environmental problems in Dubai but they rarely initiated their own involvement in environmental projects or the community.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching was good in KG and the high school and acceptable in elementary and middle phases. The subject knowledge of many teachers was strong but not all had sufficient understanding of how children learn. Many teachers planned interesting activities, such as group work and hands-on investigations. These engaged and challenged students and allowed them to collaborate while teachers supported and guided them in their

learning. This was particularly evident in KG and the high school where expectations were high. Research, at home as well as in class, was developing strongly, particularly in English. In some lessons, teachers talked too much and relied too heavily textbooks and worksheets. This restricted learning. The use of open-ended questioning to stimulate critical thinking was most evident in the high school.

Assessment was good in KG and acceptable in the rest of the school. Assessment information was detailed and, for most grades in the elementary, middle and high phases of the school, was linked to international benchmarks. Internal testing, in some subjects, was not properly aligned with common core standards. The connections between curriculum, teaching and assessment leading to strong attainment and progress were not well understood outside KG. The growing use of self- and peer-assessments helped guide improvements in learning. Tracking systems informed students, teachers and parents by tracking progress. In lessons, the majority of teachers provided useful feedback to individuals and groups of students. Written feedback was identified as an area for improvement in the previous report, and this had not been sufficiently developed in all phases. The use of assessment results to modify lesson plans to meet the needs of students was under-developed.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was good in KG and the high school and acceptable in the elementary and middle phases. Effective language development was at the heart of the KG programme. A review of the curriculum to align it to the Common Core Standards was in its early stages. Extra-curricular offerings were good in the high school level but limited in the other parts of the school. Some cross-curricular opportunities were planned but they were inconsistent across all subject areas. Enrichment opportunities such as “Challenge and Distinction Competitions” were offered but were insufficient in number.

Curriculum design to meet the needs of all students was acceptable at all levels. Although provisions for groups of students with differing learning needs had been addressed in the curriculum, it was limited in scope and inconsistent in its implementation. Some adjustments to the curriculum were made for students with special educational needs but these were not extensive and were not consistently implemented. In-class support for students with special educational needs was not effective. There was limited choice for students within the curriculum, especially in the high school phase.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were good. Appropriate security arrangements were in place and staff took their duty of care seriously. Clear expectations and well-rehearsed routines, throughout the day and on the school buses, ensured students were safe. School premises were kept clean and tidy, and equipment was well maintained. Fire drills and emergency evacuation procedures were carried out effectively at appropriate intervals. Medical staff kept detailed records of treatments and students received regular medical checks. The school successfully promoted healthy living and helped students to improve their fitness and well-being through a programme of health education, both in and out of school. Food served in the canteen reflected the school's healthy living policy. Staff received appropriate training in child protection arrangements and staff, students and parents were aware of the procedures. Students felt safe in school. Academic, social, and guidance counsellors supported students throughout the school.

The quality of support was acceptable in the elementary, middle and high school phases and good in KG. Relationships between staff and all students were good. Systems to manage behaviour required greater rigour and closer monitoring by senior management in elementary, middle and high school phases. Students with special education needs were enrolled across all phases. Their needs were identified at an early age and shared with staff. Processes for the identification, referral and writing of individual education plans relied heavily on external advice. Facilities and resources were insufficiently modified to meet the needs of all students. As a result, students made acceptable progress overall.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was good. All senior leaders were committed to school improvement and they shared a consistent vision and a common direction. Roles and responsibilities were delegated clearly between those with pastoral and those with academic responsibilities. Many senior leaders were knowledgeable about the relationship between teaching and learning and some areas of the school had improved. Nevertheless, senior leaders lacked high quality training to fulfil their roles effectively. Relationships between senior leaders were strong and communication systems were timely and clear. The General Director of Education supported senior leaders in the school improvement process but there was insufficient experience in improving teaching and learning amongst the leadership team.

The quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning was acceptable. Self-evaluation processes were well established. They included input from committees, which had analysed the last report and determined next steps for improvement against the DSIB quality indicators. However, evaluations against the quality indicators were not rigorous enough. The school had an understanding of what it needed to improve but

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there had been insufficient analysis and evaluation of the data and this had resulted in an incomplete understanding of priorities for improvement. Improvement plans sought to develop too many aspects of the school at the same time. Performance management systems were in place. Planning was particularly strong with regard to providing resources but measurement of the effectiveness of these resources on improving students' attainments and progress was less developed. The school had made some progress in addressing most of the recommendations from the last inspection report.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. There was a range of channels of communication including a parents' portal on the school's website, which enabled questions to be asked and responses to be made. Parents received six reports throughout the year and had opportunities to meet the teachers. A Mother's Council had been established in the school with the purpose of encouraging parental engagement in school events and coordinating volunteers in the classrooms. More extensive links had been developed with the local communities, which helped visits outside the school and visitors to school to be more easily accessible.

Governance was good. The Governing Body comprised of the school owners and the General Director, who was a previous principal of the school. It had direct channels of communication with parents, students and the school's staff and took account of the views that were raised. Monthly meetings with the principal enabled the governors to monitor the performance of students and the impact of revised policies. The Governing Body was also responsible for appraising the principal's performance. It ensured that all statutory requirements had been met and responded positively to the needs of the school. The Governing Body's evaluation of school improvement was not rigorous enough.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. Management of the day-to-day running of the school was effective. There were some posts which were unfilled and some of the senior leaders had a limited understanding of teaching and learning. There were few teachers with educational qualifications or direct experience of education in the US. Sufficient opportunities for continual profession development had been planned but most training was delivered by school staff. Premises were adequate, although many rooms were too small for the numbers of students. This restricted the range of teaching approaches. Resources were limited in some areas such as the library and the computer suites.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school provide for Emirati students?

Emirati students made up just under half of the student population of the school. Their attainment and progress were mostly acceptable across most key subjects, except in English. Emirati students had better levels of knowledge, understanding, and skill in the Kindergarten and the high school. Broadly, their academic achievements were in line with that of other nationalities. The personal and social development of Emirati students was good.

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

The school had developed an acceptable policy on special education needs. The reliability of identification of students with SEN was improving, although more detailed and informed procedures were necessary. The school had three different lists of students requiring support. The curriculum was not modified to support students with literacy, numeracy and social and emotional needs. Most of the individual education planning had been prepared by outside agencies for the twenty-one students on the school register. These plans often lacked a strategy to measure student' progress or predict expected learning outcomes for the key subjects. Some teachers understood the specific needs of students and had made some effort to modify their practices. Students had made acceptable progress overall and was this was strongest in Kindergarten. The SEN team were committed and dedicated towards the development of inclusive practices for all students with SEN. They had high expectations for students' achievement levels. However, teachers had not fully embraced the vision of inclusive teaching, differentiation and focused individual education planning. The school building was not suitable for adults or students with mobility problems and no internal modifications had been made to furniture or learning spaces.

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

Almost all teachers of Arabic as a first language had secure subject knowledge. However, they had insufficient understanding of how students develop their language skills. All teachers planned for their lessons but most plans did not focus well on the students, and objectives did not often challenge them. Teachers' use of resources was often restricted to projecting the textbook pages and using teacher-prepared worksheets. Teachers' questions were varied with some attempts to promote higher-order and critical thinking. However, the questioning strategies applied were not targeted well enough to engage more students and to give them all chances to be active and reflective thinkers. Most teachers used didactic

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teaching strategies, which limited students' active and independent learning and did not enable them to develop a sense of responsibility towards their own learning. Teacher-talk was excessive and differentiation was not a feature of most lessons.

The Arabic curriculum was compliant with MoE requirements but the curriculum standards were not used well to inform lesson planning and assessment. The curriculum was mainly focused on covering content rather than developing understanding and language skills. There was not enough modification of curriculum to cater for the different needs of students. There were some resources to enrich the curriculum, particularly workbooks to support learning although they were not often used.

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	216	16%
	Last year	233	19%
Teachers	106		59%
Students	391		67%

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

Only a small proportion of parents responded to the survey. A majority of teachers and students responded. Parents, teachers and students were satisfied with the quality of the school. Parents believed their children were progressing well in all subjects but a large minority did not know about student performance in benchmarked, international assessments. Most parents said that their children enjoyed school. They believed that the quality of teaching was good, although only a minority of students agreed. Parents also felt that the amount of homework was appropriate and most said that they had sufficient guidance to support it. A larger proportion of teachers than students believed that student behaviour was good. Parents considered that the school prepared their children well for further education but students were less positive about career guidance. Most teachers said that the school modified the curriculum to meet the needs of all groups of students but students were less happy about the range of curricular choices and sufficiency of extracurricular activities. Teachers and parents thought that the school was well led. Most students were critical about the existing facilities, particularly the toilets.

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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