

INSPECTION REPORT

Dubai International School - Al Qouz

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai International School - Al Quoz

Location	Al Quoz
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dis.sch.ae
Telephone	04 338 0370/5530
Address	PO Box 125676, Dubai
Principal	Dr. Akram Zayour
Curriculum	US
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-18 / Kindergarten to Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	2,010
Number of Emirati students	1,378 (69%)
Date of the inspection	Sunday 4th to Thursday 8th March 2012

Contents

The context of the school	3
Overall school performance 2011-2012	3
How has the school progressed since the last inspection?.....	3
Key strengths	4
Recommendations	4
How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?.....	5
How good is the students' personal and social development?	6
How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?	7
How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of students?	8
How well does the school protect and support students?	9
How good are the leadership and management of the school?	10
What are the views of parents, teachers and students?.....	12
What happens next?	13
How to contact us	13
Our work with schools	14

The context of the school

Located in Al Quoz, Dubai International School Al Quoz is a private school for boys and girls aged from three to 18 years. The school followed a US curriculum and students took grade level assessments. Older students could sit a range of examinations that included SAT 1 and 2, TOEFL, a high school diploma and standardised tests in Arabic and Islamic Education.

Emirati students made up about 69 per cent of the intake and the remaining 31 per cent were mainly from regional countries and North America. The school employed 137 teachers, all of whom were appropriately qualified. In the last year, about 25 per cent of the teachers were new to the school. The school had recently been accredited by AdvancED.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Good

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Dubai International School, Al Quoz, provided its students with a good education. It had made a good start in its aim to develop 21st century skills. It had maintained the good features of its work since the previous inspection and had improved some aspects. All aspects of Kindergarten children's personal and social development had improved to outstanding and were mostly good throughout the rest of the school. However, the behaviour and attitudes of a minority of boys in the middle school remained acceptable. Teaching and learning remained acceptable in the elementary and middle schools but they were good elsewhere. Although there had been some improvements in assessment, this remained acceptable in most of the school. There was a good quality curriculum and good arrangements for health, safety and support. All aspects of leadership and management were good.

Attainment and progress in Islamic Education, Arabic as a first language and English were good but in Arabic as an additional language attainment remained acceptable because teachers' expectations were not high enough. Students' progress in mathematics in the middle school and their attainment and progress in science in the middle and high schools had improved to good. Children in Kindergarten continued to make good progress and reached good standards in English and mathematics.

Key strengths

- Students' performance had improved in science in the middle and high schools;
- Students' personal and social development in the Kindergarten was outstanding;
- The school's protection and support for children in the Kindergarten were outstanding;
- All aspects of leadership and management were good;
- The school had addressed all of the recommendations from the previous report.

Recommendations

- Improve attainment and progress in Arabic as an additional language across the school and in mathematics in the elementary and middle schools;
- Improve the support for students with special educational needs;
- Improve boys' attitudes to learning in the middle school;
- Enable all teachers to make best use of assessment information to plan and implement lessons that meet all students' needs;
- Help teachers understand how to match work to all students' abilities and rigorously monitor teaching quality to ensure students make good progress from their starting points.

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

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

Students' attainment in the key subjects was mostly good. In Islamic Education, most students could read the required chapters and had a secure knowledge of Islamic values and principles. In Arabic, speaking, listening and reading skills were higher than those in writing. In Arabic as an additional language, students had good listening skills but their writing was limited to copying. In English, the younger students' speaking and listening skills were strong. Older students' writing at length was the weakest element. In

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي
Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

mathematics, older students had a good understanding of calculus and could apply their learning to the real world. In science, older students could record, tabulate and discuss their findings and compare one science experiment result with another. In general terms, boys' attainment was sometimes lower than girls, especially in the middle school.

Progress in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language was good; progress in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable. Progress in English was good and progress in mathematics had improved to good in the middle school making it good progress overall. This was because of better teaching and curriculum alterations. Progress in science had improved to good in the middle and high schools but remained acceptable in the Kindergarten and elementary school. This was because improvements in teaching and the curriculum had yet to impact on the younger students. Overall, boys tended to make slower progress than girls especially in the middle school. Students with special educational needs made acceptable progress.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Good	Acceptable	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Outstanding	Good	Good	Outstanding
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

Attitudes and behaviour were good in elementary and high schools, outstanding in the Kindergarten and acceptable in the middle school. Behaviour in lessons was generally good but a minority of middle school boys were disrespectful in sharp contrast to the girls. Relationships were positive and students had a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Attendance over the last full term was good and punctuality was acceptable. The Kindergarten children and high school students had an excellent understanding of Islam

and its impact on Dubai society and internationally. Most students understood the local traditions and heritage well. They had a strong understanding of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai as well as their own culture. Students' civic, economic and environmental understanding was outstanding in the Kindergarten and was good elsewhere. The students had a good understanding of their responsibilities as school members. They helped by keeping the school clean and a few contributed through the student council. They led on activities to improve their environment such as the school-wide recycling project. They understood some reasons for the changes in Dubai and in the Emirates.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

Teaching was good in the Kindergarten and high school, and acceptable in the other two phases. Relationships in most lessons were positive although they were inconsistent in the middle school, because of boy's attitudes. Most teachers had strong subject knowledge and understood that students learn differently. The lesson planning format was consistent and the best teachers used it well to ensure all students made good progress. They discussed learning objectives with students and helped them to understand how to be successful learners. They encouraged students to learn independently or in groups. Whilst they made good use of time and resources, insufficient use was made of technology. The majority of teachers asked increasingly difficult questions to extend students' thinking. A minority of teachers expected the same of all students and some found learning either too difficult or too easy. The quality of teaching observed in French was good but that of physical education was acceptable.

The quality of students' learning was good in the Kindergarten and high school, and acceptable elsewhere. Most students found learning enjoyable especially when they were clear about expectations and when learning involved practical activities or group work. They were increasingly confident working independently, and girls and older students could do so for sustained periods. In the elementary and

middle schools, a minority of students, especially boys, were overly reliant on the teacher. Most students made links between what they had learned and the real world. For example, in English lessons, they discussed the issues of war and poverty. They also made links across subjects such as applying mathematical skills in science. Students enjoyed completing projects at home but skills in research and critical thinking were less well developed. In a minority of lessons, students were passive especially when their teacher dominated the lesson or when language was a barrier.

Assessment procedures were mostly acceptable but good in the Kindergarten. Here, rigorous systems monitored children's development and progress. In other phases, guidelines provided teachers and students with clear success criteria but these were not used consistently. The best teachers knew their students well and recorded results of assessments and tests. They questioned effectively to assess understanding and adapted their teaching to correct misconceptions. They were less effective, however, in planning the next steps in learning, although there was better practice in Islamic Education and Science in the high school. Marking of students' work rarely provided guidance on how to improve. Subject leaders made insufficient use of assessment data to evaluate how well teaching met all students' needs.

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

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Good	Good	Good	Good

The curriculum was good across grades and subjects. Recent improvements were raising attainment, for example in science, but their impact had yet to be realised fully. Students engaged in a broad curriculum from the arts to the sciences. Students were given some opportunities to pursue areas of personal interest but had limited subject choice. Aspects of Arabic for second language learners and provision for students not studying Islamic Education required review. Teachers communicated effectively to ensure smooth students' transitions through the different phases of the school. The curriculum was adapted well for learners of English as a second language. Students with particular talents were not always challenged whilst those experiencing difficulties did not receive focused support. Opportunities for independent research and critical thinking had increased but were not routine. There were examples of good enrichment opportunities for students, including partnerships with external groups. Students were successful in a range of sports. There were not enough extra-curricular activities for senior students.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Quality of Support	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good

The provision for health and safety was good in most phases, but outstanding in the Kindergarten. Transport arrangements were well organised and safe. The facilities were well maintained and generally safe but parts of the top floor allowed access to potentially unsafe areas. Medical staff and the social worker recorded treatments and played an important role in the healthy living aspects of the curriculum. Medicines were secure and appropriate medical information shared with staff. Fire equipment was regularly maintained and smoke alarms were in place. Evacuation procedures were clearly signed but not in all rooms. The canteen made healthy food available and students were aware of the significance of healthy living. Since the last inspection, the school had improved the arrangements for students' safety on buses and student movement at the day's end.

The quality of support for students and relationships were good. Staff's handling of behaviour issues was generally good, although in the middle school, the boisterous behaviour of a minority of boys was not managed well enough. Procedures were developing well to provide students with guidance on the next stage of their education or careers. Assessment on admission identified students who had special educational needs. In Kindergarten, these children received good support. In other phases, teachers did their best to support them but there were no learning support staff or individualised educational plans. Experienced and caring counselling and advisory teams provided good support in monitoring students' well-being and personal development. There were accurate records of attendance and punctuality, the latter being a focus for continued improvement.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The quality of leadership was good. The school had addressed the previous report's recommendations which had led to improvements. The Principal's shared vision, informed by his educational experience, was leading school development well. Leadership had resulted in a clearer definition of staff responsibilities and more effective teams. Training and better oversight were helping to develop practice but more consistent teaching quality was not firmly established. Department leaders had shown their capacity for leading improvement through subject action plans. These were beginning to impact on raising student achievement but this process was not embedded. The leaders' commitment and actions demonstrated the school's capacity to continue improving.

The school's self-evaluation was good and helping to steer further improvement. The recent accreditation work had aided whole-school reflection. Students' progress was carefully tracked; teaching quality was regularly reviewed although the reviews did not use criteria specific to current training. The school had developed its benchmarking of students' achievement against international standards. Although this was incomplete, it had resulted in some higher expectations of students' performance. The school improvement plan had the right priorities and linked these to actions and staff responsibilities. Means of judging the success of each plan had recently been added but subject action plans did not consistently include such criteria.

The partnership with parents and the community was good. The school listened to its parents and worked with them on improvement. Surveys, Parent Council meetings and communications ensured that the views of parents were heard and most felt involved in school life. Regular reports and face-to-face meetings helped parents support their children's work at home. Communications between home and school were good. The school had good links with universities, schools and civic authorities.

جهاز الرقابة المدرسية في دبي
Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau

Governance was good. The Governing Board and the Education Governing Board (EGB) played complementary roles and combined to oversee the school's strategic direction, finances and performance. They were informed of school developments and provided good support. Parent representation on the board was well established.

The quality of staff, facilities and resources was generally good. There were enough, suitably qualified teachers for subject coverage. The range of facilities was good but the learning environment was markedly better in the Kindergarten than in most other areas. Some classrooms were small for the number of students but the science laboratories were much improved. Information technology equipment had improved but was not always used well. There were shortages in physical education equipment. The library was spacious and adequately stocked.

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	130	13%
	Last year	145	14%
Teachers	60		15%
Students	127		44%

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

Small minorities of parents and teachers responded to their surveys. A large minority of senior students responded to their survey. Most parents agreed that their children made good progress in the key subjects. Nearly all parents thought their children were well cared for at school. A minority of parents and students had concerns about children's choice of healthy lifestyles. A minority of students felt unfairly treated at school: a view not shared by most teachers. The majority of students felt that there was not a good range of clubs and activities at school or that their opinions were listened to. Most parents were satisfied with school communications as teachers were with their professional development. There was general agreement from most parents, teachers and students that the school prepared students well for the next stage in their lives.

What happens next?

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

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

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

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How to contact us

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

Our work with schools

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

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

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

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