

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Dubai International School - Al Quoz

Report published in April 2013

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Dubai International School - Al Quoz

Location	Al Quoz
Type of school	Private
Website	www.dis.sch.ae
Telephone	04-338-0370
Address	P.O. Box 125676, Al Quoz
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	2,091
Largest nationality group of Students	Emirati
Number of Emirati students	1,415 (67%)
Dates of the inspection	24th to 28th February 2013

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## 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. Emirati students made up about 67 per cent of the roll and the remaining population was mainly from regional countries and North America.

The school followed a US curriculum, aligned to the Virginia State Standards. Students took termly assessments, with a minority sitting for the IBT external test. Older students could sit a range of external examinations that included the SAT, TOEFL and standardised tests in Islamic Education and Arabic.

The school employed 145 teachers, all of whom were appropriately qualified. In the last year, 35 teachers were new to the school. The school had also internally promoted eight new leaders including Heads of departments, co-ordinators and a new counsellor.

## Overall school performance 2012-2013

Good

### Key strengths

- The sustained good attainment and progress of students, notably in the Kindergarten and in the high school;
- The good and outstanding features of provision in the Kindergarten;
- The good attitudes towards school work by the girls and most of the boys;
- The improved systems to identify and support students with special educational needs.

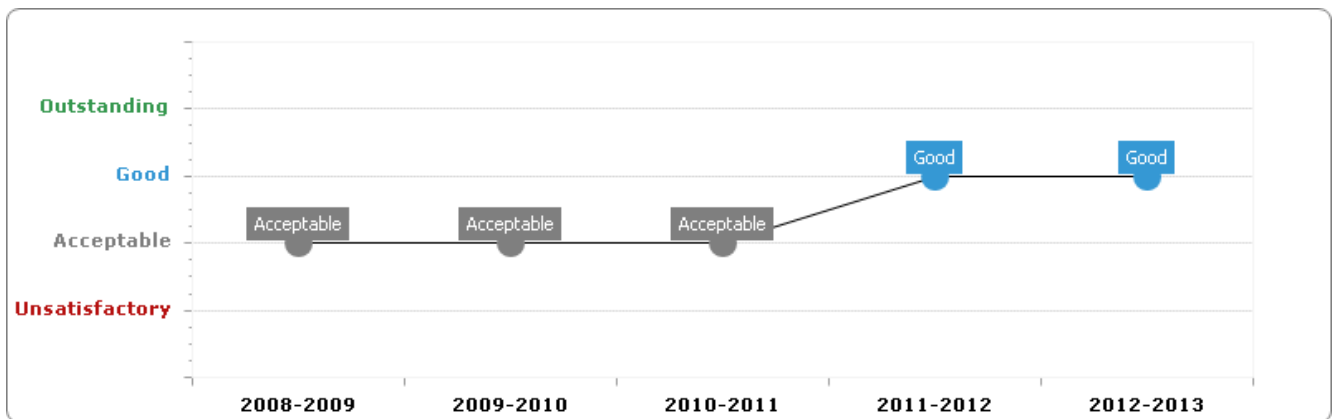
### Recommendations

- Raise students' attainment and progress in the key subjects in the elementary and middle phases;
- Continue to address the behaviour of a minority of boys in the middle phase;
- Expand the range of teaching strategies to stimulate the learning of all students, especially boys;
- Use the assessment information more effectively to meet the needs of all students;
- Adopt a more effective approach to school improvement by focusing on the most important aspects.

## Progress since the last inspection

- There was outstanding progress in English by children in the Kindergarten;
- There was good attainment in mathematics by students in the middle school phase;
- There was good attainment and progress by children in science in the Kindergarten.

## 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	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Not Applicable	Good	Good	Good
<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>	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Outstanding	Acceptable	Good	Good
<b>Mathematics</b>				
<b>Attainment</b>	Good	Acceptable	Good	Good
<b>Progress</b>	Good	Acceptable	Good	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	Outstanding	Good	Acceptable	Good
Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Outstanding	Good	Good	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	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

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

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

[Read paragraph](#)

## 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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Students' attainment in the key subjects was mixed between good and acceptable. In Islamic Education, almost all students had good knowledge about the key principles of faith and worship in Islam; they could understand and discuss many of the Islamic values. In Arabic as a first language, attainment was good across the school. Most of the students could fluently and confidently read aloud, including extra reading in the library. In Arabic as an additional language, attainment was acceptable across the school. Most students in the primary and middle phases were able to identify familiar words and understand words that were pronounced clearly. They were good at responding to instructions but did not communicate well during lessons. They had clear handwriting, but their composition skills were limited. In English, students had good listening skills, and read with understanding by the time they reached middle school. Grammar skills were well developed; most students had adequate vocabulary to express themselves well orally but less well in writing. The boys were especially weak in writing. In mathematics, Kindergarten children could count with a good degree of fluency and were confident when identifying patterns and shapes. Elementary school students had sound understanding of numbers and were able to apply their knowledge in real life contexts. As middle school students moved through the phase they had become more competent and confident in their approaches to mathematics. High school students were developing good knowledge of calculus and were able to provide tutoring for peers as a direct result of their increased understanding. In science, students showed strength in their knowledge, understanding and use of scientific terms, which for most students was above grade level. Students' scientific skills including investigation, however, required improvement. There were lower expectations and thus lower science attainment in the elementary and middle school.

Students' progress showed a similar profile to their attainment. In Islamic Education, progress was good. Memorisation and recitation skills were developing too slowly across the school, as most students did not apply the recitation rules correctly. In Arabic as a first language, progress was good across the school. The progress in the primary phase was better than in other phases, but students' reading and understanding were developing faster than their conversational skills. Most of the girls' performance in the high school was better than the than that of the boys. In Arabic as an additional language, progress was acceptable across the school. Their listening skills were better than the other skills, but in the high school, students' speaking skills were better than their writing skills. Most children entered Kindergarten with no knowledge of English but their progress was outstanding. When Kindergarten children collaborated and explored, they made rapid progress in speaking and in basic reading and writing skills. In the primary phase, progress slowed because the students were using language less actively throughout their lessons. In mathematics in the Kindergarten, children made good progress. Progress in the middle school was good, especially in

the later years. High school mathematics students made good progress in the common core curriculum skills. In science, strong instructional strategies helped most children in the Kindergarten and high school students to progress faster than expected.

[View judgements](#)

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

Attitudes and behaviour were outstanding in the Kindergarten, good in the elementary and high school grades, and acceptable in the middle school grades. Across the phases, most students demonstrated self-reliance, displayed positive attitudes and behaviour, and showed respect to other students, teachers, and staff. However, a minority of boys in the middle grades exhibited immature behaviour during classes, which hindered their progress. Most students across all phases chose to eat healthy foods during breaks and to exercise regularly. Attendance was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten, but good in the elementary and high school grades and outstanding in the middle grades during the last full term. Students at all levels showed good understanding of the role and value of Islam in the society of Dubai. They were also able to describe the history of Dubai and identify major modern, historical and cultural features of the Emirate. Students across the school had some cultural awareness, with Kindergarten children showing more advanced understanding for their ages, while students in the other phases showed some weaknesses in their knowledge of other cultures. In the Kindergarten, most children had understanding above expectations about the local community, and had very well developed work ethics and awareness of their environment. Students in the rest of the school showed good interest in their community and in protecting the environment. They were limited in the number of opportunities they had to participate in the practical application of environmental awareness to community activities.

[View judgements](#)

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

Teaching quality was good in the Kindergarten, acceptable in the elementary and middle phases and good in the high school phase. It was generally stronger in the girls' classes. Teachers' subject knowledge was good across all phases and subjects. Teachers' knowledge of how children learn best was especially good in the Kindergarten. Planning was consistent across most subjects, although the level of supporting details varied between the grades. The effectiveness of teachers' classroom management strategies varied. In the better lessons, teachers effectively involved students in learning. Although the planning for many lessons included strategies for the different ability levels and learning styles, they were seldom implemented in lessons. The breadth of activities was limited in several subjects. Worksheets were popular strategies, but they did not always serve a useful purpose. Paired and group work became more effective as the students

got older. Enquiry and critical thinking skills were underdeveloped features of most classrooms. Teachers' questions allowed some basic assessment in all subjects and, in the better lessons, promoted students' deeper understanding.

The quality of learning was good in the Kindergarten, acceptable in the elementary and middle phases and good in the high school phase. Learning was stronger in the girls' classes in the elementary and middle phases. Most students in the school were enthusiastic learners and were engaged in their learning, particularly in the Kindergarten and high school phase. Collaboration was particularly strong in the girls' lessons, where there were many opportunities to learn from peers. The majority of students were able to work independently and to take responsibility for their learning, when given opportunities. The learning of children in Kindergarten was strongly linked to the real world. In the better lessons, students made connections with other subject areas and with previous learning. Throughout the school, there was little use of information and communication technology by students. The exceptions to this were homework assignments set to develop research and presentation skills. Critical thinking was an under-developed skill; questions and tasks required students only to recall information rather than think about it.

The assessment of learning was good in the Kindergarten and acceptable in the other phases. The school had established robust systems and consistent practices to assess what had been learned. Appropriate data was collected and accurately analysed. Internal tests were scrutinised to make changes to the curriculum for the following term. Some external tests had been recently introduced; however, too few students sat the tests for them to be effective benchmarks of learning for the whole school. All students' progress was tracked and individual student information was shared with parents; summaries were available to the community at large. However, students were rarely involved in the assessment of their own learning. Teachers generally knew their students well. They graded their students' books regularly; however, comments on students' performance against the learning objectives were not consistently offered to students. Assessment information was not used sufficiently by teachers for planning to meet the needs of all the students. Ongoing assessment of learning in the Kindergarten through observations was very effective. However, such assessment was less effective in lessons in the elementary and middle phases.

[View judgements](#)

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

The quality of the curriculum was good across all four phases. It had a clear rationale that was based on the school's mission statement and it was generally was broad and balanced. However, there were no

creative arts courses and no choice for students in Grades 10 to 12. The curriculum across the school was aligned with the Virginia State Standards in English, mathematics, computers, art, French, and physical education. The science curriculum was aligned with the California State Standards. Islamic Education, Arabic and social studies followed the UAE Ministry of Education standards. Progression and continuity were supported by detailed curriculum maps and unit plans. However, the written curriculum was not always fully implemented. Transition arrangements between phases of the school ensured that most students were ready for their next stages, but the arrangements bridging the Kindergarten and Grade 1 were not as effective as other transition arrangements. The curriculum was reviewed annually and updated, but it was not consistently adapted to meet the needs of the more able and the underachieving students. In some subjects the curriculum did not consistently provide good levels of challenge. A variety of extra-curricular activities enriched the curriculum for most students.

[View judgements](#)

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

The arrangements for students' health and safety were outstanding in the Kindergarten and good across the rest of the school. Security was effectively organised, with entrances monitored throughout the day. Transport arrangements were managed appropriately. However, the organisation during departures did not ensure that all students were on the buses before they begin to move, presenting danger to a few students. The school premises were clean and well maintained. Records relating to maintenance and fire drills were in place. Students benefitted from a well organised and equipped clinic. Healthy eating and healthy lifestyles were promoted across the school, supported by teachers and the medical staff. Staff members and students were aware of the school's child protection policy.

The quality of support for students was outstanding in the Kindergarten and good elsewhere. Relationships between adults and children were warm and nurturing in the Kindergarten and management of the children's behaviour was effective. Improvement in behaviour in the rest of the school was noted as a result of new measures, except for a minority of middle grade boys. Guidance on future education and career options was appropriate for the ages of the students. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality was effective. A helpful electronic tracking system had recently been created to record students' test results and personal development. The information was used to produce reports to parents.

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

The school had an inclusive admissions policy and welcomed students with special educational needs, although procedures for their identification had only recently been put into place. Screening of children entering the Kindergarten enabled teachers to offer early intervention to children, in co-operation with local agencies. A team of teachers, academic advisors and counsellors co-ordinated the support and monitoring of students with special educational needs. Across the school, students with special educational needs made good progress overall. Most class teachers had begun to plan different learning opportunities linked to the identified needs of students. A slow pace and limited expectations in some lessons meant a few students did not have sufficient opportunities to extend their understanding and apply their skills.

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

The quality of leadership was good overall. The principal and his team had a clear sense of direction and responsibilities were strategically delegated. For example, new leaders had been appointed to improve the school's performance in specific areas. There had been a positive response to the recommendations of the previous inspection report. A large amount of relevant and recent research had been carried out by members of the leadership team to guide the school improvement plans. This process was still in the early stage of development.

Self-evaluation and improvement plans were good. School improvement documents were clear and based on the evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. This evaluation was sometimes too aspirational and the school did not always consider the time factors accurately. Links between the departmental and main school plans showed clear evaluation pathways and good monitoring at various levels. The improvement plans also included clear links to professional development and new initiatives. The school was becoming data rich but it was not clear how all staff, particularly teachers, used the data to improve students' progress. The quality of evaluation and implementation varied between subjects and phases. The school's leaders demonstrate the capacity to make further improvements.

The partnership and communication with parents was good and included the use of technology such as text messages. Parents were regularly informed about both the academic and personal development of

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their children. Parents expressed satisfaction with the work of the school and felt that the school staff were approachable and accessible. There were limited links with local businesses and the community.

Governance of the school was good. The board of governors supported the leadership team and shared the same vision for improvement. They sought the views of parents through questionnaires and meetings. The governors held school leaders to account and received regular updates about key aspects of the performance of the school.

Staffing and resources were good. The school employed experienced and suitably qualified teachers. They were deployed effectively in most phases. Most aspects of school's management were effective. The outdoors facilities were limited. The library and information technology resources were not always used effectively to promote independent learning.

[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	170	16%
	Last year	174	18%
Teachers	37		29%
Students	236		73%

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

About one-sixth of the parents responded to their survey, less than last year. Over a quarter of teachers and almost three-quarters of the senior students responded to their surveys. Most parents and students agreed they made good progress in the key subjects. Students felt safe at school but a majority did not believe that they were listened to. Most parents and students agreed that the school encouraged healthy living. A few students commented on the lack of outdoor space and the need for more sports and competitions. A majority of parents indicated that the school could do more to inform their children on how to improve. Teachers overall were very positive about the school, although some mentioned behavioural issues with boys.

## 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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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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