

INSPECTION REPORT

Islamic School for Education and Training

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Islamic School for Education and Training

Location	Al Muhaisinah
Type of school	Private
Website	www.lootah.com
Telephone	04-264-6001
Address	P.O. Box 33919, Al Muhaisinah, Dubai
Principal	Faddah Said Ahmed Nasser Lootah
Curriculum	MoE
Gender of students	Boys and Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	3-17 / Kindergarten to Grade 10
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	972
Number of Emirati students	397 (40%)
Date of the inspection	Monday 19th to Thursday 22nd March 2012

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The context of the school

Located in Al Muhaisinah, the Islamic School of Education and Training is a private school providing education for boys and girls aged three to 17 years, from Kindergarten to Grade 10. At the time of inspection there were 967 students on the roll. Three hundred and ninety seven students, representing 40 per cent of the total cohort, were Emiratis, a figure which had recently been steadily increasing.

The school followed the curriculum of the Ministry of Education which was supplemented by a number of vocational subjects starting from Grade 10 and an additional Qur'an recitation programme from Kindergarten. There were two separate sections for boys and girls from Grade 1, while classes in Kindergarten were mixed gender. For three quarters of the total student population, Arabic was the mother tongue. The remaining quarter, of non-Arab students, attended first language Arabic classes. The school had recently introduced English as the language of instruction in half of the mathematics and science lessons in Kindergarten.

The school provided comprehensive support and accommodation to many orphans, around ten per cent of its current student population. These students were from within and outside UAE. Training and work opportunities were also provided for many of its graduating students. Fifty two teachers were employed in the school and all had adequate qualifications for the subjects and ages they were teaching. Two thirds of the teaching staff in Kindergarten was new to the school.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The Islamic School for Education and Training provided an acceptable quality of education for its students. Whilst it had a few good and outstanding features, mainly linked to the quality of students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic, Kindergarten was a significant weakness in the school.

There were a number of improvements in a few of key areas in the school. Arrangements for the safety of and support for students had improved in Cycle 1. There had been considerable effort to improve students' practical skills in science in most parts of the school. Students' attainment and progress in Arabic continued

to improve, particularly in Arabic as an additional language in Cycle 2. Young children in Kindergarten benefited from the increased use of English. Across the school, students' understanding of Islam and their appreciation of the culture of Dubai and UAE continued to develop. Generally, the quality of teaching and learning was inconsistent across the different phases and subjects. The limited range of teaching strategies in Kindergarten inhibited children's progress in mathematics and science. While there were many examples of effective teaching, particularly in Islamic Education and Arabic, teachers talked for too long in too many lessons and the activities frequently provided little challenge and limited opportunities for independent and collaborative learning. This was particularly notable in Kindergarten where teaching did not always take into account how young children learn. The curriculum in the Kindergarten was weak but acceptable overall in Cycle 1. For older students, the curriculum was enriched by a range of vocational subjects for boys and girls. Student support was acceptable throughout the school. The school leadership had a strong commitment to the school ethos and shared its vision well with the school community and maintained good relationships with parents. Yet, poor improvement planning and the underdeveloped roles of a few, but key members of the middle management team, limited its effectiveness in bringing about further improvements. There were no significant changes in governance since last year and facilities and resources remained acceptable.

Key strengths

- The high attainment and progress in Islamic Education and Arabic, particularly for older students;
- Students' positive attitudes and behaviour and their well-developed Islamic and cultural understanding;
- The school's good relationship with parents and the local community;
- The school's strong commitment to Islamic values, the support it provided for underprivileged students and its valuable role in providing older students with vocational training.

Recommendations

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning across the school by sharing best practice from within the school and seeking good models from elsewhere;
- Improve the Kindergarten curriculum to ensure it is more focused on developing skills and understanding and adopting teaching and methods that take into account how young children learn;
- Continue to improve the curriculum so that is more challenging and stimulation and meets the needs of all groups of students;
- Establish robust systems for self-evaluation so that the school can form accurate and evidence-based views on all aspects of its work and focus its improvement planning more sharply on improving learning outcomes ;
- Build the capacity and enhance the effectiveness of middle management to bring about further improvements in the school, particularly in Kindergarten.

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

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Islamic Education				
Attainment	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Good	Good	Good	Outstanding
Arabic as a first language				
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Good	Outstanding
Arabic as an additional language				
Attainment	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding	Not Applicable
Progress	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding	Not Applicable
English				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science				
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Good	Good

Attainment in Islamic Education was consistently above expectations, particularly for older who had above-average Qur'an recitation skills. First language learners of Arabic, particularly older students, had well developed skills in almost all aspects of the learnt language. By Cycle 3, most all non-Arab students were helped to reach near-native speakers' levels. In English, speaking and listening were the stronger skills, and girls performed better than boys. Reading skills were in line with expectations while students' ability

to undertake extended independent written work was less well developed. In mathematics, most Kindergarten children knew the basic shapes and numbers; elsewhere, most students demonstrated acceptable knowledge and understanding of key mathematical concepts. Students' problem-solving skills and the use of mental strategies were more limited. In science, young children identified animals, plants and parts of the human body but did not begin to investigate scientific phenomena for themselves. In Cycles 1-3, attainment for most students was in line with expectations with observation, identification and basic skills, secure; the skills of scientific enquiry were significantly weaker across the school.

Most students made above-average progress in developing their understanding of key Islamic concepts of Hadeeth and Qur'an recitation skills. Steady progress in Arabic year on year, both as a first and as an additional language, was made by most students, so that by Cycle 3 they achieved outstanding levels. In English, progress was steady overall although better for the girls in Cycle 2, who produced a good volume of work. Kindergarten children steadily improved their listening, speaking and their letter recognition and formation skills. Most students in Grades 1 to 10 made steady progress in their mathematical knowledge and skills although less so with problem-solving skills. Kindergarten students however, made less progress in understanding concepts. In science, students made acceptable progress over time in Cycle 1 and continued to develop their practical skills. Progress in developing investigative skills was significantly weaker, particularly in Kindergarten where children had limited hands-on experience and their learning was too narrowly focused on learning science vocabulary.

From Cycle 1 to 3 in Islamic Education, Emirati students made outstanding attainment in the memorisation of The Holy Qur'an and the application of Tajweed rules. Their progress in understanding key Islamic concepts and rulings was good and their knowledge of Seerah was well developed. In Arabic, progress was good overall in most key aspects of the language, although progress was more limited because of low expectations in writing. Progress was acceptable over time in English in developing grammatical knowledge and application. Attainment in reading in English was acceptable and most Emirati students could read and understand text at their appropriate level in Cycles 1 to 3; listening skills were the strongest element in all cycles. Mathematics attainment was acceptable overall with few estimation strategies being used to predict or check the accuracy of answers. Attainment in science was acceptable and improving in many age groups due to more practical demonstrations in Cycles 2 and 3. In Kindergarten, the development of scientific skills and understanding was limited, as all children including Emirati children, rarely participated in hands-on learning activities, leading to unsatisfactory progress.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Attitudes and behaviour	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Acceptable	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Acceptable	Good	Good	Good

In Kindergarten, children's attitudes and behaviour were acceptable as they, too often, did not understand the need to take turns, to answer or to play collectively. Elsewhere, students demonstrated very positive attitudes towards each other, their school and healthy living. When unsupervised, their behaviour was mostly sensible. They demonstrated high levels of understanding of Islam and its relevance to contemporary Dubai and the world. They had excellent understanding of the cultural heritage of UAE and appreciated the diversity of the Dubai population. Their civic, economic and environmental understanding was acceptable in Kindergarten but far better in the senior parts of the school. Kindergarten students had adequate understanding of their responsibilities such as, keeping their classrooms clean. Older students demonstrated clear understanding of how rapidly Dubai has developed. Most students had a good understanding of major environmental issues and could explain the impact of the recent development on the Dubai environment. They considered preserving the environment as a religious duty but had limited opportunities to engage in relevant activities inside and outside the school.

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Teaching for effective learning	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Teaching for effective learning was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten and acceptable in all other phases. Most teachers knew their subjects well and established good relationships with their students. They were able to share their knowledge effectively and most could engage students' interest and attention. In Kindergarten however, lessons were not always well suited to the learning needs of young children, with too little practical activity planned. Elsewhere, many lessons featured the set text book as the central content although most teachers tried to introduce additional activities to add variety and interest to their teaching. A common feature of the less successful lessons was the tendency for teachers to do most of the talking, whilst expecting too little from the students. Better lessons gave opportunities for students to discuss their responses, to share ideas and to work independently and collaboratively with others. Although teachers knew their classes well, too many lessons were pitched to suit the middle ability students with insufficient challenge for the more able.

Students' learning was unsatisfactory in Kindergarten where tasks were not always well suited to promoting young children's learning. The quality of learning was acceptable elsewhere. In most lessons students were keen to succeed and were happy to take every opportunity that was offered, responding to questions or discussing possible answers with their peers. Co-operative learning was common as students helped each other with tasks and shared their ideas, but there were too few opportunities for students to learn the importance of collaboration to achieve a common goal. Some learning took place with little reference to its relevance in the real world. However, content from one subject was often used to help explain concepts in another, for instance, when Grade 9 boys practised their speaking skills using the science topic of the water cycle. Girls in Cycle 2 undertook some good quality research tasks but for most students, there was insufficient opportunity to develop enquiry skills or to engage in critical thinking.

Assessment was acceptable across all cycles of the school. Data on students' performance was collated from a range of sources such as testing at the beginning and end of each term, class tests and homework tasks. In some subjects such as English, results were analysed to identify the levels at which individuals were working. As a result, teachers knew the overall strengths and weaknesses of their classes. In many lessons this information was enhanced as teachers observed their students' progress and checked their level of understanding. Occasionally, students were given opportunities to assess each other's work, which helped them understand what good performance looked like. Although test results and work were scrutinised, the information was not used by teachers to tailor their lesson plans to meet more fully students' varying needs. Marking of work was regular, but did not always point out errors or offer advice on how to improve. In a few subjects, assessment results were not always accurate because formal and informal assessments did not evaluate the full range of skills the curriculum expected the students to develop.

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

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Curriculum quality	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

The curriculum was unsatisfactory in the Kindergarten, acceptable in Cycles 1 and 2 but good in Cycle 3. It had a clear rationale, was broad and balanced, except in the Kindergarten where it was very narrow, with limited choice. In Cycles 1 to 3, continuity and progression were planned carefully. There were acceptable transition arrangements between phases, except between Kindergarten and Cycle 1 where young children were not always well prepared for the demands of Grade 1. In Cycles 1 to 3, the curriculum had been reviewed to include more practical science and visits to local places of interest, which had enhanced levels of engagement and improved understanding. In Kindergarten, the recent review of the provision for English led to an improvement in students' skills in the subject. However, in other areas, particularly in mathematics and science, the curriculum did not ensure that experiences for the youngest children were relevant to their age, delivered through play, included exploration, choice and challenge. Throughout the school, there were limited, successful modifications to meet the needs of the least and most able students. Overall, opportunities for students to develop critical thinking were under-developed, although older students were beginning to develop research skills. Nevertheless, the curriculum was enriched well with the inclusion of a range of vocational subjects such as tailoring, nursing, house management and electronics. These were helpful in preparing students for the world of work. Similarly, in Islamic Education, daily Qur'an recital lessons ensured high attainment and progress in this aspect.

How well does the school protect and support students?

	KG	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

Arrangements for health and safety in the school were acceptable. The school's premises were well-maintained, safe, clean and litter-free. The management of vehicle traffic at the beginning and end of the school day had improved although bus safety arrangements regarding the wearing of seatbelts were not strictly adhered to. The school provided equipment and resources that were suitable and safe to use in most areas, in particular in the technical rooms and laboratories. All medicines, including vaccines, were stored safely and administered responsibly by the school doctor and nurse. There was a wide range of health-related notices and activities evident in the school. However, some of the food available from the canteen did not fully support the efforts that staff were making to educate students about healthy lifestyles. Whilst key people had been identified to be responsible for child protection, arrangements had not yet been clearly developed and communicated with the wider school community.

The quality of support for students was acceptable in all phases of the school except in Cycle 3 where it was good. The care and welfare of students was a high priority for all the staff in the school and reflected the school's mission statement. Students showed care and respect for their teachers and each other and behaviour management practices had improved. The school helped students make career choices in the final year of schooling, including finding training and job placements. There was limited awareness of different categories of special educational needs and only four students had been identified by the school as having special education needs. Formal processes to identify more and less able students were in place but resulted in limited modifications in teaching or the curriculum; support and monitoring of students with special educational needs was left to teachers in class who rarely gave these students special attention in their lessons. Punctuality when attending class was of a high standard and the school monitored attendance.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

The quality of leadership was acceptable. The school leaders demonstrated strong commitment to the ethos of the school and the vision of its owner. They set clear direction for the school and focused on building good relationships within the school and with parents. Although responsibilities had been delegated to middle managers, not all had sufficient capacity to move teaching and learning further in the school, particularly in Kindergarten.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was unsatisfactory. A few important improvements had taken place in the school such as the improved management of arrival and departure times of the students and the recruitment of teaching assistants in Kindergarten. However, the school's action plan was not based on a rigorous and accurate analysis of aspects of the school's work. In addition, success criteria were neither specific enough nor shared with all staff and, in most cases, the action taken had limited impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms. The school's plan did not sufficiently focus on enhancing the capacity of the existing section and subject co-ordinators to lead change or on seeking to employ good models from outside the school.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. The school enjoyed good relationships with parents, kept an open-door policy and listened well to their comments and suggestions. The school also supported the community outside through the availability of its medical facilities, child day-care services and the training and work opportunities it provided to graduating students. It maintained regular communications with parents on their children's achievement and progress although the school reports did not always include sufficient information in support of the student's learning.

Governance remained acceptable as there had been limited changes in this respect since the last inspection. The school remained accountable to the owner and board of trustees. Only a few parents were

aware of the existence of the governing board and when it met. The school governors had yet to explore alternative ways of ensuring parental involvement in improvement planning and decision making.

Management, staffing, facilities and resources were acceptable. Staffing levels were adequate and resources were managed well. Timetabling was good and the school's premises were well maintained. The employment of teacher assistants in Kindergarten was a good step although only a few of them were well used. Learning resources were adequate overall and significant improvements had taken place in the Kindergarten and in science, although students' access to these resources was limited. Although teachers had appropriate qualifications, a minority of them, particularly in the Kindergarten, lacked the necessary knowledge and understanding of children's developmental needs.

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	228	27%
	Last year	312	35%
Teachers	19		36%
Students	26		53%

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

A little over a quarter of the parents responded to the survey, compared to around a third last year. Almost all who responded agreed that their children were making good progress in Islamic Education and Arabic, both as a first and an additional language. Almost all highlighted, as strength of the school, their children's well-developed understanding of Islam. Most parents were satisfied with the progress their children were making in English and mathematics, although fewer students agreed with them. In science, most parents felt that their children made good progress but only the majority of students agreed. Overwhelmingly, parents and students felt that teaching was good at the school whilst a smaller percentage thought that their children enjoyed most lessons in the school. A significant minority of parents were not confident that their children had a sufficient range of activities and clubs to choose from. Most parents said that their child was safe at the school, although only half of the students agreed. Most parents considered that their children were well looked after at school, although they were less certain that the school was successful in dealing with bullying. Most students agreed with these views. The majority of parents concurred that they were involved in the life of the school and that the school leaders listened well to their views. A few parents were not sure that school reports were sufficiently informative and around one fifth of the students shared similar views. Almost all teachers were very positive about all aspects of the school, although a few expressed concerns about the level of cleanliness in students' bathrooms.

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

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 achieves its aims.

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